The Misérables Abridged and Retranslated

by

Victor Hugo
and
Laurent Paul Sueur.

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by Laurent Sueur

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France.

Books like ***The Misérables*** will be useful so long as there is, by virtue of law and culture, social damnation, which artificially begets hell in civilization and vitiates the divine nature of human destiny, so long as the three great problems of the century (the degradation of man through pauperism, the corruption of woman through hunger, the destruction of childhood by the spread of darkness) are unsolved, so long as social asphyxia is possible in any part of the world, in other words, so long as ignorance and poverty exist on earth, which are all the more meaningful.

Hauteville house, The 1st of January 1862.

Volume 1:

Fantine.

BOOK FIRST:
A RIGHTEOUS MAN.

CHAPTER I: MR. MYRIEL.

In 1815, Mr. Charles-Francois-Bienvenu Myriel was bishop of Digne. He was an old man of about seventy-five years of age; he had occupied the see of Digne since 1806.

Although this detail is not linked to the story I am about to relate, in order to be thorough, it is useful to mention the various rumors which had been going

around about him since he had arrived in the diocese. Whether you like it or not, people's opinion of people is as important as what they do. Mr. Myriel was the son of a member of the Parliament of Aix, who belonged to the gentry. It was believed that his father wanted him to inherit this office and that he had married him to a young lady when he was very young (eighteen or twenty), which was a common practice among parliamentary families. Even though he was married, Charles Myriel wasn't a faithful husband. He was rather small but well proportioned, elegant, attractive and witty; he had dedicated the first part of his life to idleness and libertinism. Because of the French Revolution, parliamentary families were decimated, persecuted, pursued and dispersed. Mr. Charles Myriel emigrated to Italy at the very beginning of the revolution. His wife, who suffered from a heart disease, died of a stroke in that country. He had no children. What happened next? The collapse of the former French society, the downfall of his own family, and the tragic events of the year 1793, which terrified the emigrants and might have moved him to look for renunciation and solitude. In the midst of these distractions and the love affairs that occupied all of his time, was he suddenly overcome by a mysterious feeling, something stronger than any misfortune? Nobody knows the answer. However, when he returned from Italy, he was a priest.

In 1804, Mr. Myriel was the parish priest of Brignolles. He was already old and almost retired.

At the time of the coronation, a small problem, which we don't remember but was connected to his occupation, moved him to go to Paris. Among other influential people, he asked for the help of cardinal Fesch. On one occasion, the Emperor visited his uncle, and the worthy priest, who was waiting in the anteroom, came face to face with His Majesty. Napoleon, who realized that he had aroused the priest's curiosity, said to him abruptly:

-‘Who is this good man who is staring at me?’

-‘Your Imperial Majesty’, answered Mr. Myriel, ‘you are looking at a good man, but I am looking at a great man. Both of us can enjoy it.’

On that very evening, the Emperor asked the Cardinal the name of this priest, and, some time later, Mr. Myriel was surprised to learn that he had been appointed Bishop of Digne.

Besides, nobody knew Mr. Myriel’s former life and what his family had done before the revolution.

Mr. Myriel had to suffer the fate of every newcomer to a little town where there are many talkative mouths and very few intelligent heads. He had to suffer it, although he was a bishop and because he was a bishop. That being said, the rumors about him might have been unfounded rumors, noise, words, empty words, less than words: logorrhea, as we say in Greek!

However, after nine years in office in Digne, the hearsay that interested ordinary people at the beginning had sunk into oblivion. No one would have dared to mention them; no one would have dared to recall them.

Mr. Myriel had arrived at Digne accompanied by a spinster, Miss Baptistine, who was his sister and ten years younger than he.

Their only domestic was Mrs. Magloire, a servant who was the same age as Miss Baptistine. After having been the servant of Father Myriel, she now assumed the double title of maid of Miss Baptistine and maid of Monsignor.

Miss Baptistine was tall, pale, thin and sweet; she was the epitome of what people call ‘respectability’, for it seems that women are respectable by nature. She had never been pretty; her whole life, which had been but a succession of holy deeds, had finally conferred a sort of pallor and vividness on her; as she aged, she acquired what we may call the beauty of kindness. What had been leanness in her youth became transparency as she grew old, and this diaphaneity had turned her into an

archangel. She was a soul rather than a virgin. She was a shadow. There wasn't enough substance to create a sexualized body. She was a glowing piece of matter with obedient big eyes, a pretext that linked her soul with her flesh.

Mrs. Magloire was a chubby old white woman. She was always busy and out of breath because she kept working and was asthmatic.

Upon his arrival, Mr. Myriel was installed in the episcopal palace with the traditional pomp and ceremony that was laid on for bishops, for the Imperial decrees stated that they ranked below field marshals. The mayor and the president paid a visit to him; then he paid a visit to the general and the prefect.

Once the ceremony was over, the inhabitants of the city hoped that the bishop would trip up.

CHAPTER II: MR. MYRIEL BECOMES MONSIGNOR WELCOME.

The bishop of Digne's palace was next to the hospital. It was a beautiful stone mansion built at the beginning of the last century for Monsignor Henri Puget, a University of Paris doctor of divinity and the abbot of Simore, who had been appointed bishop of Digne in 1712. Everything was luxurious in this building: the bishop's flat, the sitting rooms, the bedrooms, the large main courtyard surrounded by a Florentine peristyle, and the gardens planted with magnificent trees. In the dining-room, which was a beauteous long hall situated on the ground-floor and opening onto the gardens, Monsignor Puget had hosted a banquet, on the 29th of July 1714, in order to entertain Charles Brûlart de Genlis, the prince-archbishop of Embrun, Antoine de Mesgrigny, the capuchin bishop of Grasse, Philippe de Vendome, the Grand Prior of France and Abbot of Saint Honorius of Lerins, François de Berton de Crillon, the bishop and

baron of Vence, Cesar de Sabran de Forcalquier, the bishop and lord of the manor of Glandeve, and Jean Soanen, an Oratorian who was a court preacher and the bishop and lord of the manor of Senez. The portraits of those personages adorned the dining-room, and that unforgettable date – the 29th of July 1714 – was engraved on a white marble table and gilded.

As to the hospital, it was a narrow, one-storey building with a small garden.

Three days after his arrival, the bishop visited the hospital. At the end of the visit, he asked the director to come to his house.

-'My dear sir', he said, 'how many patients are there at the moment?'

-'Twenty-six, Your Grace.'

-'That's exactly what I thought', said the bishop.

-'The beds', continued the director, 'are close to one another.'

-'That's what I noticed.'

-'The halls are but rooms, and it is difficult to ventilate them.'

-'That's what I believe too.'

-'When the sun shines, the garden is very small for the convalescents.'

-'That's what I said to myself.'

-'As to epidemics, this year we have faced the typhus fever and the French sweat; two year ago, sometimes we had to treat up to one hundred patients: we were overwhelmed by work.'

-'I have no doubt about it.'

-'Your Grace', said the director, 'we must accept our fate.'

This conversation took place in the dining-room, on the ground-floor.

The bishop remained silent for a moment, then he turned abruptly to the director of the hospital and said:

-'Dear sir, how many beds do you think this hall can hold?'

-‘Monsignor’s dining-room?’, exclaimed the stupefied director.

The bishop scanned the hall; it seemed that his eyes were taking measurements.

-‘It can hold at least twenty beds’, said he, speaking to himself. Then, raising his voice, he added:

-‘Well, my dear friend, I must tell you that there is a big mistake. Twenty-six people are in five or six small rooms. There are three of us here, and there is room to accommodate sixty people. There is a mistake indeed. Actually, you have my house and I have yours. Give me back my house and take this one.’

On the following day, the twenty-six patients moved to the bishop’s palace and the bishop to the hospital.

Mr. Myriel was penniless since the revolution had impoverished his family. His sister was in receipt of a yearly income amounting to five hundred francs. Mr. Myriel was a bishop and a civil servant. So, the government paid him fifteen thousand francs every year. On the very day when he took up residence in the hospital, Mr. Myriel decided to use the money in a certain way, and he almost made no changes to his arrangements as long as he was Bishop of Digne.

Miss Baptistine submitted herself to his plan. This holy woman regarded him as her kind brother and her ecclesiastical superior. She loved and venerated him. When he spoke, she bowed; when he acted, she agreed with him. As for the maid Mrs. Magloire, she grumbled a little. We must notice that Monsignor Welcome had kept only one thousand francs, which, added to Miss Baptistine’s income, made fifteen hundred francs a year. These two old women and this old man subsisted on these fifteen hundred francs.

Thanks to the money saved by Mrs. Magloire and the intelligent management of Miss Baptistine, when a priest came to Digne, the bishop could afford to entertain him.

He had been in Digne for about three months when he exclaimed:

-'I don't have much money!'

-'This is true', retorted Mrs. Magloire, 'all the more so because you have not claimed the allowance which the department must pay you for travel in town and in the diocese. This is a long-established tradition.'

-'Well', cried the bishop, 'you're right, Mrs. Magloire.'

So, he lodged a claim.

Some time later, the departmental council granted him a yearly sum of three thousand francs, which raised a great many people's hackles.

That being said, this affair satisfied Mrs. Magloire.

-'Well', she said to Miss Baptistine, 'at fist, Monsignor Welcome gave money to the others, but he ended up spending some of it. Those three thousand francs are for us!'

However, that same evening, the bishop wrote his sister a note in which he declared that this money was reserved for charities.

As for the episcopal taxes, loans, dispensations, baptisms, sermons, blessings of churches and chapels, weddings, etc., the bishop levied them on the wealthy. He was greedy for profit because he gave the money to the poor.

Soon afterwards, cash donations rolled in. The rich and the poor knocked at Mr. Myriel's door: the ones gave alms, whereas the others begged for alms. In less than a year, the bishop became a kind of banker, but he did not get richer, which was why he did not change the way he lived.

CHAPTER III: A HARD BISHOPRIC FOR A GOOD BISHOP.

Even though Monsignor Welcome had turned his coach into alms, he did not forget his pastoral visits. Digne is an exhausting diocese: there are very few plains, lots of mountains, almost no roads, thirty-two parishes, forty-one vicariates, and two hundred and eighty-five auxiliary churches. However, the bishop managed to criss-cross it. He went on foot when he visited someone who lived nearby, or drove a cart when the person lived on the plain, or rode a donkey when he had to go to the mountains. The two old women used to accompany him, but when the trip was too tiring, he would go on his own.

On one occasion, he arrived at Senez. He was riding a donkey. Since he was broke, he couldn't afford to ride a horse. The mayor came at the gate of the episcopal palace to welcome him; he watched him dismount from his ass, which appalled him. Some people were laughing. 'Mr. Mayor and wealthy citizens of Senez ', said the bishop, 'I realize that I shock you. You believe that I am vain because I am riding an animal which was used by Jesus Christ, but I can assure you that I did so because I had no other option.'

When he traveled, he was kind and indulgent; he talked more than he preached. He didn't overestimate any virtue, and his arguments were never far-fetched. When he was in a village, he always placed much emphasis on the inhabitants of the neighboring village. For instance, in places where people mistreated the poor, he would say: 'Examine the case of the inhabitants of Briançon. They allowed the poor, widows and orphans to have their fields mowed three days before the others. When their houses are dilapidated, they rebuild them for free. This is a blessed town: there has not been a single murderer for a century.'

So, he was serious and paternal when he spoke. When he could not find good examples, he invented parables; like Jesus, he always got to the point using few words and lots of images; he was persuaded by what he said and very persuasive.

CHAPTER IV: DEEDS THAT MIRROR WORDS.

People enjoyed talking with him. He used simple words in order to be understood by the two old women who lived in his house. When he laughed, he laughed like a schoolboy. Mrs. Magloire used to address him as Your Highness. On one occasion, he rose from his armchair and went to his library to take a book. This book was on one of the upper shelves. Since the bishop was rather short, he could not reach it. 'Mrs. Magloire', he said, 'fetch me a chair, for His Highness is not that high!'

When he met one of his distant relatives, the countess of Lô, she never forgot to enumerate what she called 'the expectations' of her three sons. Some of her relatives were very old and close to dying; her sons were their natural heirs. A grandaunt of the youngest had bequeathed him an income of one hundred thousand francs; the second son was the successor of his uncle the duke; the eldest had to inherit his grandfather's post as Peer of France. The bishop used to listen quietly and politely to those pardonable maternal boasts. However, on one occasion, he was more thoughtful than usual. As the countess of Lô was discussing the same topic, she stopped talking and then asked: 'My dear cousin, what are you thinking about?' 'I am reflecting', replied the bishop, 'on a strange sentence that was written, I think, by St. Augustine and which said: "You cannot expect to much of the person from whom you inherit property."' Actually, most of the time, his jokes were more serious than they appeared to be.

As to charity, he never felt discouraged, even when the faithful refused to give money, for he knew how to convince them. For instance, he was once invited to a personage's residence, where he met the marquess of Champtercier, a wealthy, avaricious old man who was a very Voltarian ultraroyalist. Yes, this species once existed. The bishop came up to him, touched his arm and said: 'Lord Champtercier, you must give me a little bit of money so that I may help the poor.' The marquess turned around and retorted: 'Your Grace, I have my own poor people.' 'Give them to me', replied the bishop.

He had the same attitude towards the rich and the poor. He condemned nothing hastily, and he always took circumstances into account. Considering himself an ex-sinner, he was not very strict. He was indulgent towards women and poor people, on whose shoulders society rests. He used to say: 'The mistakes made by women, children, servants, the poor, the weak and ignorant people are actually made by husbands, fathers, teachers and people who are strong, rich and knowledgeable.' He would also say: 'Teach ignoramuses as many things as possible, for society is guilty of not providing free education.' As you can notice, he judged things and persons in a certain manner. I assume that he had been inspired by the New Testament.

A tragic incident took place at Digne: a man was sentenced to death because he had killed someone. The priest refused to assist the convict. So the bishop replaced him. He went to the prison straightaway, entered the cell of the wretched man, called him by his name, took his hand and spoke to him. He spent the whole day with him; he neither ate nor drank but prayed for the soul of the murderer. He also asked him to pray for his own soul. He mentioned the best truths, which are simple. He was a father, a brother and a friend; he was a bishop only when he blessed him. He taught him everything, put his mind at rest and consoled him. That

man was on the verge of despair, but the bishop soothed him a little.

On the following day, when they came to fetch the criminal, the bishop was there. He followed the poor man, who was in chains. The crowd could see that he was next to him, wearing a purple miter and an episcopal cross. He, too, got in the tumbrel; he, too, ascended the scaffold. The poor man, so sad and overwhelmed the day before, was radiant, for he was in a state of grace. The bishop kissed him, and when the Guillotine blade was about to fall, he said to him: 'A man killed by another man is brought back to life by God; a man expelled from his house by his brothers meets God. Pray, believe, and live: God is here.' When he descended the scaffold, there was something in his eyes that made the onlookers move aside. They did not know what was the most admirable thing: the pallor of his face or his composure? He returned to the humble house he called his palace and said to his sister: 'I have just officiated in an appropriate way.'

The sight of the guillotine traumatized him, and he had difficulty overcoming his disgust. Actually, the scaffold is terrifying. The guillotine is the dark side of the law; it is called "punishment"; it is not a detail, which is why one cannot remain neutral. The scaffold is a hallucination. It is the executioner's accomplice; it devours; it tears human flesh; it drinks blood. The scaffold is an ogre whom the judge and the carpenter begot; it is a ghost that seems to live an unbearable life composed of all the lives of the people it beheaded. Hence, on the day following the execution and on many succeeding days, the bishop appeared to be devastated. The serene violence of the decapitation had disappeared; the specter of social justice tormented him. At times he talked to himself and stammered melancholic soliloquies. For instance, his sister heard this one: 'I did not think that it was that monstrous. One should never be absorbed in God's law and forget man's law. Death belongs to God

alone. Men are not allowed to handle this mysterious thing.'

As time passed, these impressions weakened and probably disappeared. Nevertheless, it was observed that the bishop stopped crossing the square where the Guillotine was.

Mr. Myriel could be summoned at any hour to the bedside of the sick and dying, for he knew that this was his greatest duty and labor. He could sit down and remain silent for long hours, facing the man who had lost the woman he loved or the mother who had lost her child. He knew when he had to keep quiet and when he had to speak. He didn't expect people to forget their sorrow, for he wanted them to dignify and glorify it through hope. He knew that faith is beneficial. He wanted to counsel and calm down the desperate man by showing him the man who was resigned to his fate; he wanted to alleviate the grief that gazes at the grave by showing him the grief that gazes at a shining star.

CHAPTER V: UNKNOWN BRIGHTNESS.

According to the inhabitants of Digne, some time later, he did a thing that was more dangerous than the trip across the mountains infested with bandits.

In the country near Digne, there was a man who lived alone. This man, if you'll pardon the expression, was a former member of the Convention! His name was G***, and when a person mentioned it, everybody was horrified. In fact, the inhabitants of Digne regarded him as a monster. Although he had not voted for the execution of the king, he was almost a regicide. Besides, like all those brutes, he was an atheist. However, since the new regime did not consider him a criminal, he had been allowed to stay in France.

He lived in the country, in a very isolated place ignored by passers-by. Nevertheless, when the bishop

looked in the direction of this man's dwelling, he could not refrain from saying: 'There is a lonely soul over there… I must pay him a visit.'

Finally, it was rumored that a young shepherd, who worked for Mr. G***, had fetched a doctor, that the villain was dying, that he could hardly move and that it was an emergency. So the bishop grasped his walking stick, put on his raincoat and set off.

He reached Mr. G***'s humble dwelling at sunset. He beheld a white-haired man seated on an old wheelchair placed near the front door, who was smiling at the sun. A lad, the shepherd, was standing near him. He was handing him a glass of milk.

The Bishop stepped forward. The sound of the footsteps made the old man turn his head. He was as surprised as an old man can be.

-'Since I arrived here', said he, 'it is the first time that someone has come to visit me. Who are you, sir?'

The bishop answered:

-'I am Mr. Myriel.'

-'Mr. Myriel: I have heard that name. Are you the man whom people call Monsignor Welcome?'

-'It is I.'

-'So you are my bishop?'

-'Kind of.'

-'Please, approach.'

The ex-member of the Convention extended his hand, but the bishop did not shake it; he just said:

-'I am pleased to see that I have been misinformed. You do not seem to be ill.'

-'Sir', replied the old man, 'I am going to recover. I will die in only three hours' time! You see, I know how the last hour looks like. Yesterday, my feet were cold; today, my knees are cold too; now the chill is reaching my waist; when it reaches the heart, I will die. The sun is beautiful, isn't it? You can talk to me; it does not tire me. It is a good idea to come to see a man who is about to die. This moment requires witnesses. I would have liked to see the

dawn, but I know that I will die in three hours' time. It will be nighttime. It doesn't matter. Death is a simple matter. I don't need the morning light to accomplish that. Well, I'll die in the starlight.'

The bishop was not really moved, for he did not feel God's presence in this way of dying. He sat on a stone.

-'Congratulations!', he said reproachfully, 'after all, you did not vote for the execution of the king.'

-'Do not congratulate me, sir. I did vote for the execution of the tyrant.'

-'What do you mean?', resumed the bishop.

-'Ignorance tyrannizes man. I voted for the deposition of that tyrant, namely monarchy, which is based on falsehood. Man must be governed by science. That being said, I did not vote for the execution of Louis XVI because I believed that I had no right to kill a man. I just wanted to destroy evil.'

The bishop could not help whispering:

-'1793!'

The member of the Convention stood up and retorted:

- '1793: I was expecting that word. A cloud had been forming for fifteen hundred years and it burst. You just want to sue the clap of thunder!'

- 'What about Louis XVII?'

The ex-deputy stretched out his hand, grasped the bishop's arm and said:

-'I will mourn the death of kings' children when you mourn that of the street urchins.'

-'I mourn the death of all children', answered the bishop. 'Nevertheless, the French Revolution was a bloodbath.'

The ex-deputy began to pant, but his eyes showed that he was still lucid. He went on:

-'The revolution, taken as a whole, was a great achievement for mankind. Unfortunately, 1793 existed, and it was a dreadful earthquake. However, I feel certain that we will soon absolve it of all its sins, for it created a

better world. Disasters can be beneficial sometimes. The human race was ill-treated, but it made progress.'

-'Progress must believe in God. Good cannot have an impious servant. Atheists are bad leader.'

The old man pointed at the sky and said:

-'The infinite exists. It is there. If the infinite had no self, the self would be its limit; it would not be infinite; in other words, it would not exist. But it exists. Consequently, it has a self. The self of the infinite is God… Your Grace, I am an old man and I am going to die; what do you want me to do?'

-'I want you to bless me', answered the bishop as he knelt down.

When the bishop raised his head again, the face of the ex-deputy was shining like a marble statue. He had just expired.

The bishop returned home; he was obsessed with a mysterious thought. He spent the whole night in prayer. On the following morning, some inquisitive people tried to speak of Mr. G***; he just pointed at the sky. From then on, his generosity and kindness towards the destitute redoubled.

BOOK SECOND: A MAN'S DOWNFALL.

CHAPTER I: ON THE EVENING OF A MARKET DAY.

At the beginning of the month of October 1815, about one hour before sunset, a man who was traveling on foot entered the little town of Digne. The few inhabitants who saw him at that precise moment grew anxious, for he was shabby. He had a medium build frame and was forty-six or forty-eight years old. He had very short hair and a beard. No one knew him, for he was just

a passer-by. Where did he come from? From the south, from the seashore perhaps. This man had walked all day. He seemed very tired. Some women had seen him drink from the fountain which stands at the end of the promenade. He was very thirsty, for the children who followed him saw him stop again two hundred paces further and drink from the fountain located in the marketplace. A policeman followed him with his eyes until he entered the city hall.

The stranger reached a nice inn called the Cross of Colbas. He entered the kitchen; the innkeeper, who was also the cook, was preparing dinner. He heard a creak, which moved him to turn his head. He beheld the newcomer; as he kept on looking at his saucepans he said:

-'How may I help you?'

-'I would like to rent a room and eat', said the man.

-'It is possible', he replied. He turned his head, looked at the traveler and added: 'if you pay… '

The man took a large leather purse from the pocket of his overall and answered:

-'I have money.'

-'In that case, please, come in', said the innkeeper.

The man put his purse back in his pocket, set his knapsack on the ground, near the door, kept hold of his stick and sat on a stool, near the fireplace. Meanwhile, the innkeeper wrote a line or two on a piece of paper, folded it and handed it to a child who served as a scullion and a footman. He ran off in the direction of the city hall.

Then the child came back. He gave the same piece of paper to the innkeeper, who unfolded it eagerly, like a person who is expecting a reply. He read it attentively, tossed his head in annoyance and remained thoughtful for a while. Then he took a step in the direction of the traveler, who looked nervous.

-'Sir', he said, 'I cannot put you up.'

-'Why? I will pay you. Do you want me to pay you in advance? I have money!'

-‘The inn is fully booked. Besides, there is no more food.’

The man burst into laughter, turned to the fireplace and the stoves, and said:

-‘No more food! What is this? There is enough food for twenty people.’

-‘This is not for you’, retorted the innkeeper.

-‘I am in an inn; I am hungry; I won’t go away.’

The innkeeper leaned forward and said in a tone that made him shiver: ‘Go away! I know who you are! You are Jean Valjean! When I saw you come in, I was suspicious of you. So I sent someone to the city hall, and here is their answer. Can you read?’

The man glanced at it, looked down, picked up the knapsack he had put on the ground and went away.

He roamed the streets in search of a place where he could eat and sleep, but it seemed that all the innkeepers knew that he was a disreputable person.

When he reached the cathedral, he threatened it with his fist and lay down on the stone bench which stands in front of a printing house. At that very moment, an old woman exited from the edifice. She saw the man lying in the shade.

‘My dear friend, what are you doing here?’, she inquired.

‘As you can see, madam, I am sleeping’, he retorted.

This lady was the marchioness of R***.

-‘On this bench?’, she went on.

-‘I slept on a wood mattress for nineteen years’, said the man, ‘tonight I am going to sleep on a stone one.’

-‘Are you a soldier?’

-‘Yes, I once was a soldier.’

-‘Why don’t you go to the inn?’

-‘Because I have no money.’

-‘Unfortunately’, said the marchioness of R***, ‘I have only four cents in my purse.’

-‘It doesn’t matter; it's the thought that counts.’

The man took the four cents. The marchioness of R*** went on:

-'You cannot spend the night here. You must be cold and hungry. They should have put you up out of charity.'

-'I have knocked at every door.'

-'What happened?'

-'They all slammed the door in my face.'

The marchioness touched the man's arm and pointed at a small house that stood next to the episcopal palace.

-'Have you really knocked at every door?'

-'Yes, I have.'

-'Have you knocked at that one?'

-'No, I haven't.'

-'Knock at that door.'

CHAPTER II: WISDOM SHOULD BE MORE CAUTIOUS.

That evening, the bishop of Digne worked rather late in his bedroom after the stroll he took around the city. At eight o'clock, he was still working. As usual, Mrs. Magloire entered it in order to take the silverware from the cupboard near his bed. A moment later, knowing that the table was set and that his sister was waiting for him, the bishop closed his book, rose from his chair and entered the dining-room. Mrs. Magloire was talking garrulously. She was speaking to Miss Baptistine about the latch of the entrance door. Actually, as Mrs. Magloire was doing the shopping, she heard that a sinister-looking prowler had arrived in Digne. Since the prefect and the mayor hate each, the police was inefficient, which was why it behooved wise people to maintain law and order. So they had to barricade themselves into their house and lock the doors. Since Miss Baptistine wanted to please Mrs. Magloire without displeasing her brother, she ventured to say timidly:

-‘My dear brother, did you hear what Mrs. Magloire said?’

-‘I vaguely heard something’, replied the bishop.

-‘This house is not safe at all’, retorted Mrs. Magloire. ‘If Monsignor so wishes, I will go and tell Paulin Musebois, the locksmith, to come at once in order to fix the old locks on the doors.’

At that moment, someone knocked at the door violently.

-‘Come in’, said the bishop.

The door opened. A man entered. We already know him. It was the wayfarer who was looking for a place to spend the night. Mrs. Magloire shivered with fear and remained silent. Miss Baptistine gave him a startled look, but she regained her composure when she beheld the serene face of her brother.

-‘My name is Jean Valjean’, said the stranger. ‘I am an ex-con. I spent nineteen years in a penal colony. I was released four days ago; I am on my way to Pontarlier, which is my destination. I walked twelve leagues today. This evening, when I arrived in this town, I went to an inn, and they turned me out because of my yellow passport, which I had shown at the city hall. I have money. I worked for nineteen years at the penal colony of Toulon and earned one hundred and nine francs plus fifteen cents. I will pay you. I can afford it. I am exhausted and hungry. May I stay?’

-‘Mrs. Magloire’, said the bishop, ‘you will set another place at the table.’

The man came close to the lamp that was on the table and resumed:

-‘Did you hear what I said? I am a galley-slave, an ex-con. I come from Toulon. Here is my passport. It is yellow, as you can see. Do you want to read it? I can read. I learned to read at the penal colony. Here is what they wrote on this passport: “Jean Valjean, reformed offender, born in ***, sentenced to nineteen years in prison. He is a

very dangerous man." So, do you still want to put me up? Is this an inn? Can I eat and sleep here?'

-'Mrs. Magloire', said the bishop, 'you will put clean sheets on the bed that is in the alcove.'

The Bishop turned to the man and added:

-'Please, sir, take a seat and warm yourself at the fire. We are going to have dinner. Your bed will be made while you are eating.'

The man's harsh, gloomy face lit up. He started to stammer like a lunatic:

-'Really? You are going to put me up! And you are not going to kick me out even though I am an ex-con! You even called me sir! I am going to have dinner! I am going to sleep in a bed with a mattress and sheets. You are a good man. Besides, I have money. I will pay good money for that. By the way, are you an innkeeper?'

-'I am', replied the bishop, 'a priest, and I live here. Mrs. Magloire, the light is too dim.'

She understood him and went to get the two silver candlesticks that were on the mantelpiece, in Monsignor's bedroom. She set them on the table.

-'Sir, did you suffer a lot in Toulon?'

-'Oh yes! The red uniform, the ball and chain, a plank to sleep on, heat, cold, hard labor, the inmates, caning, the double chain for nothing, and solitary confinement for peccadilloes. Dogs are happier! Nineteen years! I am forty-six. Now I have a yellow passport.'

-'Yes', the bishop resumed, 'you stayed in a very sad place, but the crying repentant sinner will find more joy in Heaven than the righteous man who wears the white chiton of his ecstatic happiness. If you are angry when you leave that kind of place, you deserve pity; if you remain peaceful and friendly, you are worthier than any one of us.'

Mrs. Magloire had served the soup. It was made with water, oil, rye bread, salt, bacon, mutton, figs and cheese. She had added a bottle of *Saint-joseph* of her own accord.

That man paid no attention to anybody. He just ate voraciously. Towards the end of the dinner, the bishop turned to him and said: “You must be tired.” Mrs. Magloire cleared the table very rapidly. Then the two women retired to their bedrooms so that their guest might go to bed.

CHAPTER III: TRANQUILITY.

After bidding his sister goodnight, Monsignor Welcome took one of the two silver candlesticks that had been set on the table, handed the other to his guest, and said:

-‘Sir, I am going to lead you to your room.’

The man followed him.

The bishop showed the alcove to his guest. A bed with white sheets was waiting for him. The man set the candlestick on a small table.

-‘Well’, said the bishop, ‘good night! Tomorrow morning, before you set out, you will drink a bowl of warm milk from our cows.’

-‘Thank you sir’, replied the man. Then he turned to him, folded his arms, glared at him and exclaimed in a hoarse voice:

-‘You allow me to stay in your house, but I might be a criminal: have you thought it through?’

-‘This is God’s business’, answered the bishop.

Then, gravely, moving his lips like a man who is praying or talking to himself, he raised two fingers and blessed him, although he did not bow to him. He neither turned his head nor looked behind him and entered his bedroom. The stranger was so tired that he did not even get into bed. Actually, he blew out the candle with his nostril, like the convicts do, dropped onto the bed and fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV: JEAN VALJEAN.

Towards the middle of the night, Jean Valjean woke up.

His family was poor. Those farmworkers lived in *Brie*. When he was a child, he did not learn to read. Some years later, he became a pruner, in Faverolles. His mother's name was Jeanne Mathieu; his father was called Jean Valjean or Vlajean. He had lost them at a very early age. His mother had died of a milk fever. His father, a pruner like him, had died after having fallen from a tree. His only living relative was his elder sister, a widow who had seven children. When her husband died, the eldest of the seven children was eight years old and the youngest was one. As for Jean, he was twenty-five. He took the place of the father, for he wanted to help the person who had raised him. Consequently, he had spent his youth working hard for very little money. He had never had a girlfriend; he hadn't had the time to fall in love.

In 1795, on a Sunday evening, Maubert Isabeau, the owner of the bakery that stood on the square facing the church of Faverolles, was about to go to bed when he heard a violent blow on the metal shutter of his shop. He saw a hand pass through an opening in the shutter and the windowpane, grasp a loaf of bread and carry it away. Isabeau rushed out. The thief fled. Isabeau ran after him and caught him: he had flung the bread away, but his arm was still bleeding. The shoplifter was Jean Valjean!

He was prosecuted for burglary in an inhabited house at night and sentenced to five years in prison! So they took him to the penal colony of Toulon and lost his identity: now he was *Number 24 601*. What became of his sister? What became of the seven children? Did they find a kind person who agreed to take care of them? Can an orange tree bloom once it has been sawed off?

Towards the end of the fourth year in prison, Jean tried to escape. The other inmates assisted him, as is

custom in that sad place. He escaped and wandered through the fields for two days. On the evening of the second day, he was captured. The Maritime Court sentenced him to three more years in prison, which made eight years. During the sixth year in Toulon, he tried to escape again; he resisted arrest; the judge added five years. Four years later, he failed again and got three more years. Finally, I think it took place during the thirteenth year, he made one last attempt: he was recaptured. He got three more years, which made nineteen years. He was released in October 1815; he had been incarcerated in 1796 for having broken a windowpane and stolen a loaf of bread! Jean Valjean had entered the penal colony of Toulon sobbing and supplicating; he left it without uttering a word. The sad man felt hopeless now.

CHAPTER V: TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.

As the cathedral's clock struck two in the morning, Jean Valjean awoke. He had slept for more than four hours. He was not tired anymore. He opened his eyes and looked around. Then he closed them in order to fall asleep again, but he could not, for he was obsessed with the silver forks, knifes and spoons which Mrs. Magloire had set on the table.

Three o'clock struck. He opened his eyes again, jumped out of bed and stretched out his arm in order to grasp his knapsack, which he had placed in a corner of the alcove. He sat on his bed and started to think. His mind was in a whirl. The clock struck: it was a quarter past three or even half past three. This sound moved him to act. He grasped a lit candle with his right hand, held his breath and headed silently towards the door of the bishop's bedroom. It was ajar, for the bishop had not closed it. He looked in the room as a moonbeam passed through the windowpane. It illuminated the opalescent face of the bishop, who glowed with satisfaction, hope

and bliss. It was more than a smile: almost a sparkle of rapture. At night, the souls of righteous men contemplate the mysterious firmament. Jean Valjean He had never seen anything like this before. Morality has no greater spectacle than a twisted conscience on the verge of crime which contemplates the sleep of a good man.

He was staring at the old man. Wasn't he hesitating? Yes, he was; he was vacillating between two abysses: Hell and redemption. He was about to crush this skull or kiss that hand.

Suddenly Jean Valjean went past the bed, approached the cupboard near the bedhead, turned the key, seized the silverware, retraced his steps to the door, entered the oratory, opened the window, stepped over the ground floor parapet, crossed the garden, and fled.

CHAPTER VI: SUSPICIONS.

The following morning at sunrise, Monsignor Welcome strolled in his garden. Mrs. Magloire rushed over to him; she was very upset.

-'Your Grace, Your Grace!', she exclaimed, 'do you know where the basket in which we store the silverware is?'

-'Yes', replied the bishop.

The bishop had just picked the basket up from a flower bed. He showed it to Mrs. Magloire.

-'Here it is.'

-'Well', she said, 'Where is the silverware?'

-'Ah', answered the bishop, 'it is the silverware that troubles you! I don't know where it is.'

-'Gosh, it has been stolen! The man who was here last night stole it.'

Mrs. Magloire rushed over to the oratory, entered the alcove, came back and shouted:

-'Your Grace, the man is gone! The silverware has been stolen!'

She suddenly saw footprints on the backyard fence.

-'He went this way. He jumped over the fence. What a disaster! He has stolen our silverware!'

The bishop remained silent for a moment; then he looked up and said gently to Mrs. Magloire:

-'Did this silverware belong to us?'

Mrs. Magloire was speechless. Another silence ensued; then the bishop went on:

-'Mrs. Magloire, it did not belong to me, for the real owners are the poor. Who was he? A poor man of course!'

-'What kind of flatware will Monsignor use now?'

-'Mrs. Magloire, I will use pewter forks and pewter spoons!'

-'Pewter tastes peculiar.'

-'So I'll take iron forks and iron spoons.'

-'Iron tastes peculiar too.'

-'Fair enough!', said the bishop. 'I'll eat with wooden cutlery.'

A few moments later, he sat at the table where Jean Valjean had sat on the previous evening.

All of a sudden, someone knocked at the door.

-'Come in', said the bishop.

The door opened. A strange-looking group appeared in the doorway. Three men were holding another man by the collar. The three men were policemen; the other one was Jean Valjean. A sergeant stepped forward, saluted and said:

-'Your grace, our suspicions were aroused because this man was carrying this silverware…'

-'And he told you', the bishop interposed, 'that it had been given to him by a kind old fellow who had put him up.'

-'Consequently', replied the sergeant, 'you are suggesting that we let him go.'

-'You should do so', added the bishop.

That's what he did! Then the three policemen left, the bishop turned to Jean Valjean and he said in a low voice:

-'Keep in mind that you promised to use this money to become an honest man. My brother, I bought your soul in order to offer it to God. Hence, I forbid you to misbehave.'

CHAPTER VII: LITTLE GERVAIS.

Jean Valjean left the town as if he were escaping from prison!

As the sun was setting, Jean Valjean neared a bush and sat on the yellowish grass. One could see the Alps on the horizon and a plain that was intersected by a path. A young Savoyard aged ten was walking along the path. He kept singing and flipping a forty-cent coin.

The child halted beside the bush; he did not notice Jean Valjean. Then he flipped the coin again. This time the forty-cent coin did not land on his hand: it rolled to the thicket where Jean Valjean was resting. He set his foot on it. The child had followed the coin with his eyes. So he came up to the man.

-'Sir', said the young Savoyard, 'I want my coin back.'

-'What's your name?', inquired Jean Valjean.

-'Little Gervais, sir.'

-'Go away.'

-'Sir, would you mind giving me my coin back?'

Jean dropped his head; he did not answer. So the child repeated:

-'Would you mind giving me my coin back?'

Jean was looking at the ground.

-'My coin', cried the child, 'my white coin, my money!'

It seemed that Jean Valjean did not hear him. The child grasped the collar of his overall and shook him. At

the same time he tried to move the big shoe that was hiding his treasure.

-'I want my money back, my forty-cent coin!'

The child wept. Jean Valjean raised his head. He moved slowly; he looked bewildered; then he grasped his cane and cried:

-'Who's there?'

-'I, sir', replied the child, 'Little Gervais! It is I! Please, give me the forty-cent coin back and move your foot away!'

-'Ah, it's still you!', said Jean Valjean. Rising abruptly to his feet, he added: 'Go away!'

The frightened child looked at him and fled. He disappeared rapidly. Then the sun set. At that moment, he caught sight of the forty-cent coin. He darted convulsively towards the silver coin, seized it, stood up and began to scan the horizon. He saw nothing. Night was falling. He walked rapidly in the direction of the place where the child had disappeared. After one hundred paces, he paused, looked around and saw nothing. So he shouted:

-'Little Gervais, Little Gervais!'

Nobody replied. So he began to run. From time to time he halted and shouted in a tearful voice: 'Little Gervais, Little Gervais!'

He chanced to behold a priest who was riding a horse. Hence, he came up to him and asked:

-'Sir, have you seen a child follow this road?'

-'No, I haven't', said the priest.

-'His name is Little Gervais.'

-'I haven't seen anybody.'

He took two five-franc coins from his bag and handed them to the priest.

-'Father, this is for the poor. He is a ten-year-old boy who carries a small suitcase and a hurdy-gurdy.'

-'I haven't seen him.'

Jean Valjean took two more coins and gave them to the priest saying:

-'For the poor.'

Then he added:

-'Father, have me arrested, for I am a thief.'

Much alarmed, the priest spurred his horse on and fled. Jean Valjean started to run again. He kept shouting out 'Little Gervais', but nobody answered, and he did not meet anybody.

One can wonder why he had stolen that coin. Was it the last effect of the evil thoughts from prison? Probably! As a matter of fact, it was not he who had stolen the money; it was not the man; it was the inner beast which, mechanically, had simply set its foot on the coin while intelligence was struggling against vice. When intelligence resurfaced and saw the brute act in that fashion, Jean Valjean recoiled in horror.

This last misbehavior had a decisive effect on his personality. First of all, he tried to find the child in order to give him back his coin. Secondly, when he realized that it was impossible, he halted, sighed and decided to repent: the ex-con faded out as he embraced the bishop's ideals.

Jean Valjean wept for a long time. How long did he weep? What did he do afterwards? Where did he go? No one knows. However, on that night, someone crossed the street on which the bishop's residence was situated and saw a man kneel down in front of that building and pray!

BOOK THIRD: IN 1817.

CHAPTER I: A DOUBLE QUARTET.

In 1817, four young Parisians played a practical joke on four young ladies. These Parisians came from Toulouse, Limoges, Cahors and Montauban! Since they were students, they studied in Paris. In France, when

people study in Paris, they believe that they were born in Paris!

These young men were very ordinary. They were neither good nor bad, neither learned nor ignorant, neither intelligent nor stupid. They were handsome because they were young. Felix Tholomyès came from Toulouse, Listolier from Cahors, Fameuil from Limoges, and Blachevelle from Montauban. Of course they had girlfriends. Blachevelle loved Favourite, so named because she had lived in England; Listolier adored Dahlia, who adored Dahlias; Fameuil venerated Zéphine, which is short for Josephine; Tholomyès dated Fantine, who had been nicknamed Blondie because of her beautiful golden hair.

Favourite, Dahlia, Zéphine and Fantine were four charming young women. They worked a bit, for their love affairs prevented them from working a lot. The young men were schoolmates; the young girls were friends.

Fantine was a kind of flower that grows on the pavement of poverty. She was born in Montreuil-sur-mer. Who were her parents? Nobody knew. Her name was Fantine. Why? She had never had any other name. When she was born, the *Directory* still existed. Since she was an orphan, she did not have a surname! Since the Church no longer existed, she had not been christened! On one occasion, someone saw a little girl walk barefoot in a street, and he called her Fantine. Like sparrows, she was christened by the rain of destiny. At the age of ten, Fantine left the city in order to work for some farmers of the district of Pas-de-Calais. At fifteen, she came to Paris 'to seek her fortune.' Fantine was beautiful and remained pure as long as she could. She was a lovely blonde with fine teeth. Her dowry was made up of gold and pearls: gold on her head, pearls in her mouth. She worked for a living; she loved for a living; she met Tholomyès.

Blachevelle, Listolier, and Fameuil formed a sort of group headed by Tholomyès, for he was a smart guy. He was a typical old student. He was rich: he had an income

of four thousand francs. He was a pleasure-seeker in his early thirties, but he looked much older. On one occasion, he called the three others aside and said:

-'Fantine, Dahlia, Zéphine and Favourite have been asking us for nearly a year to surprise them. We promised them that we would. Besides, our parents keep on writing to us. Hence, it is high time we made a decision. Let us talk about it.'

The result of this confabulation was a walk that took place on the following Sunday.

CHAPTER II: FOUR PLUS FOUR EQUALS...

On that day, they woke up at five o'clock in the morning. Then they took the stagecoach to Saint-Cloud, looked at the dry cascade and exclaimed: 'This must be beautiful when there is water!' They had lunch at the *Black Head,* went for a ride on the merry-go-round near the lake, ascended the steps of Diogenes' tower, played roulette on Sèvres Bridge, picked flowers in Puteaux, bought reed flutes in Neuilly, ate apple pies everywhere, and were perfectly happy. In a word, they had a fantastic time.

After lunch, the four couples went to what was called the King's Square in order to see a novelty that came from India. It was an odd, charming shrub with a long stem whose numerous leafless branches were covered with a great many tiny white flowers; the plant looked like a tousled wig decorated with sugar crystals.

Once they had seen the shrub, Tholomyès offered them a donkey ride. They returned via Vanvres and Issy. They left the donkeys, crossed the Seine by boat and walked to Star Square. They had been walking since five o'clock in the morning, but Favourite pointed out that people never grew tired on Sundays. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the four jolly couples hurtled down the roller coaster, a strange edifice which occupied the

Beaujon Hill and whose undulating line could be seen from the Champs-Élysées.

From time to time Favourite exclaimed:

-'And the surprise? I want to see the surprise.'

-'Be patient', replied Tholomyès.

CHAPTER III: AT BOMBARDA'S.

After the roller coaster, they began to think about dinner. So the tired section headed for Bombarda's restaurant, which was located on Rivoli Street.

They sat around a table. It was half-past four in the afternoon. They were not hungry anymore. Some people were singing and all the others were chatting: the dinning hall was filled with noise.

Favourite, folded her arms over her chest, looked at Tholomyès and said:

-'Have you forgotten the surprise?'

-'No, I haven't', replied Tholomyès. 'Gentlemen, the time of the surprise has come. Ladies, wait here for a moment.'

-'First, we must kiss you', said Blachevelle.

-'On the brow', added Tholomyès.

They kissed them on the brow and slipped away putting one finger on their lips.

Favourite applauded and said:

-'They are so funny.'

-'Don't be long', murmured Fantine; 'we are waiting for you.'

The young women saw the young men exit Bombarda's Café arm in arm. They turned around, waved, smiled and disappeared in the dusty crowd that invades the Champs-Elysées on Sundays.

-'What are they going to offer us?', inquired Zéphine.

-'It will certainly be something pretty', answered Dahlia.

-‘I, for my part, want something made of gold’, said Favourite.

A certain time elapsed. The waiter who had served them at dinner entered. He held in his hand something that looked like a letter.

-‘What is that?’, asked Favourite.

-‘It is a letter which those gentlemen left for you’, replied the waiter.

-‘Why didn’t you bring it at once?’

-‘Because the gentlemen ordered me to give it to you in an hour’s time.’

Favourite snatched the piece of paper from the waiter’s hand.

-‘Oh!’, said she, ‘there is no address, but someone has written *this is the surprise* on it.’

She opened it and read:

‘Beloved ladies,

I regret to inform you that we have parents. They are called fathers and mothers by the civil code. These parents keep complaining, and they ask us to come back. Since we are good boys, we are going to obey them. When you read this letter, five fiery horses will be taking us home. The Toulouse stagecoach tears us away from the abyss, and the abyss is you, O pretty ladies! We return to society, duty and order at full speed, at a rate of three leagues an hour. For the sake of France, we must become ordinary people: prefects, fathers, policemen and state councilors. You should admire us, for we are sacrificing ourselves. Don’t mourn us for long; find other lovers quickly. If this letter tears you apart, tear up the letter! Farewell.

Signed: Blachevelle, Fameuil, Listolier, Félix Tholomyès.

Postscript: Félix paid the bill.’

The four young women looked at one another. Favourite was the first to break the silence.

-‘Well!’, she exclaimed, ‘this is a surprise.’

-‘It is very funny’, said Zéphine.

-‘It must have been Blachevelle’s idea’, resumed Favourite. ‘I think that I love him now! What a surprise indeed.’

-‘No’, said Dahlia; ‘it is clear that it was Tholomyès’ idea.’

-‘Long live Tholomyès!’ exclaimed Favourite, Dahlia and Zéphine, and they burst into laughter. Like the others, Fantine laughed, but an hour later, she returned home and cried. It was her first love affair; she had given herself to Tholomyès as if they had been husband and wife… and the poor girl had a child!

BOOK FOURTH: TO ENTRUST SOMETIMES MEANS TO ABANDON.

CHAPTER I: A MOTHER MEETS ANOTHER MOTHER.

At the beginning of this century, near Paris, in Montfermeil, there was a sort of greasy spoon, which no longer exists. This establishment was run by Mr. and Mrs. Thénardier. It was situated on Baker Street. Above the door, there was a painted board showing a man who was carrying a general with big gilt epaulets covered with large silver stars on his back; he was bleeding. The rest of the picture represented a misty battlefield. An inscription said: ‘To the sergeant of Waterloo.’

Before the front door stood a massive cart. A huge chain hung from the axle. The center of the chain swung near the ground; two little girls were seated in the loop. One was two years and a half old and the other eighteen months. The two brown-haired girls were well dressed. A

few paces apart, seated on the threshold of the restaurant, their mother, an unpleasant mannish woman, was swinging the two children by means of a long cord. Someone came up to them and said:

-'You have two beautiful children, madam.'

She turned her head. A woman was standing before her. She was holding a beauteous little girl aged 3 in her arms. She was also carrying a large, heavy bag. This woman looked sad and poor, which concealed her beauty but not her youth. In fact, it was Fantine, but it was difficult to recognize her.

Ten months had elapsed since the joke. What had happened during those ten months? We can guess the answer easily: she had been abandoned and had sunk into poverty. Since Tholomyès had compelled her to disdain the odd jobs she knew, employers had forgotten her. So she was unemployed and poor. She had asked a letter writer to write three letters to Tholomyès, but he had never replied. She wanted to return to Montreuil-sur-mer, her native town, for she believed that someone would recognize her and give her a job. Of course, she would have to conceal her mistake, namely her child.

Mrs. Thénardier, who was seated on the threshold, raised her head, thanked her and asked her to sit on the bench. Then the two women began to chat. Fantine said:

-'You see, my daughter cannot accompany me, for single mothers have difficulty getting a job: provincials are narrow-minded. Thank heavens I passed your inn. When I caught sight of your daughters, I was overwhelmed. I said to myself: "Here is a good mother. I feel certain that the two girls will be glad to have a new sister." Furthermore, it won't be long until I return. So do you want to take care of my daughter?'

-'I will think about it', replied Mrs. Thénardier.

-'I will give you six francs a month.'

A man's voice coming from the greasy spoon added:

-‘Seven francs, not less, and six months’ fees paid in advance.’

-‘I will pay’, said the mother.

-‘Plus fifteen francs to cover the first expenses’, added the man’s voice.

-‘I will pay’, said the mother. ‘I have got eighty francs. I have enough money to pay for that and go to Montreuil-sur-mer! I will earn money there, and as soon as I have some, I will fetch my darling daughter.’

The deal was concluded. The mother spent the night at the inn, gave Mr. Thénardier the money and set out on the following morning. A female neighbor of the Thénardiers saw her crying as she was walking along the streets of Montfermeil.

CHAPTER II: THE LARK.

Wickedness does not engender prosperity: the greasy spoon was at a low ebb.

Thanks to the traveler’s fifty-seven francs, Mr. Thénardier had paid a few bills, but he needed more money. So his wife went to Paris, pawned Cosette’s clothes and got sixty francs. When that sum was spent, the Thénardiers regarded the little girl as a heavy burden, which was why they ill-treated her.

Her mother had settled in Montreuil-sur-mer. She sent a letter every month in order to hear from her child. The Thénardiers always replied that 'Cosette was perfectly fine.'

The first six months passed. Then Fantine sent seven francs in order to pay the seventh month’s fee. She did the same thing the following months. The year was not over when Mr. Thénardier said: 'we must raise our prices.' He wrote to Fantine in order to ask her to send him twelve francs. The mother, who believed that her child was happy and in good health, sent the twelve francs.

Some people cannot love without hating at the same time. Mrs. Thénardier venerated her two daughters and hated the stranger: a mother's love can be problematic sometimes. Hence, she was mean to Cosette, and Éponine and Azelma were mean to her. Young children just copy the behavior of their mothers.

Two years elapsed. Mr. Thénardier learned that the child was probably illegitimate and that the mother had to conceal it. So he asked her to send fifteen francs every month because 'the creature' had 'a voracious appetite'. He even threatened to kick her out. The mother sent the fifteen francs.

When Cosette was very young, the two other children treated her as a punchbag; as she grew up, that is to say before she was even five years old, she became the servant of the household. Villagers had nicknamed her *the Lark,* for she was a fearful trembling, small creature who was no bigger than a bird and got up at the crack of dawn every morning in order to sweep the floor or pick up food in the fields. However, that lark never sang.

BOOK FIFTH: DECADENCE.

CHAPTER I: IN MONTREUIL-SUR-MER.

Fantine moved to Montreuil-sur-mer in 1818; she had left her hometown ten years earlier. In 1816, an innovation had revolutionized the black glass industry. The inventor had become rich, which is fine, and had enriched everyone around him, which is even better. Nobody knew him. It was rumoured that he had little money when he arrived in Montreuil-sur-mer, that he was wearing the outfit of a factory worker and that he spoke like one. When he entered Montreuil-sur-mer, on a December evening, a big fire had broken out in the city

hall. This man had rushed into the burning building and saved the police captain's children, which was why they had forgotten to ask him to show them his passport. That man's name was Mr. Madeleine.

He was a good-hearted fifty-year-old man who always seemed preoccupied. Thanks to the fast growth of the industry which he had restructured, Montreuil-sur-mer had become a rather important industrial city. Mr. Madeleine made huge profits, which had enabled him to have a large factory built. Hence, the destitute could come, get a job and avoid starvation. Mr. Madeleine just demanded goodwill from men, modesty from women, and probity from everybody. Since he was very generous, he had financed an extension of the hospital, two schools, a homeless shelter, a nursing home for old and disabled workers, and a pharmacy where poor people could get medicines for free.

In 1820, five years after his arrival in Montreuil-sur-mer, the services he had rendered to the community moved the king to ask him whether he wanted to become the mayor of this quiet little town. At first, he declined the offer, but the prefect, personages and even ordinary people pressured him to accept. Jean Valjean had become Mr. Madeleine; Mr. Madeleine thus became Mr. Mayor.

CHAPTER II: FAINT FLASHES OF LIGHTNING ON THE HORIZON.

At the beginning of the year 1820, the newspapers announced the death of Mr. Myriel, the bishop of Digne, who had died in the odor of sanctity at the age of eighty-two. On the following day, Mr. Madeleine was clad in black and had tied a black ribbon around his hat. All the denizens noticed that Mr. Madeleine was in mourning. They concluded that he was somewhat related to the venerable bishop. Hence, the few snobs who still regarded him as a nouveau riche began to see him in a

favorable light, and all the gossips hushed. In 1821, 'Mr. Mayor' was uttered in Montreuil-sur-mer with the same deference as 'Monsignor' had been uttered in Digne in 1815.

One man remained aloof. As a matter of fact, he was suspicious of Mr. Madeleine. This man's name was Javert; he was a police inspector, which is an unpleasant but useful profession. He was born in prison. His mother was a fortune teller and his father a jailbird. As he grew up, he began to believe that he did not belong to society and despaired of ever being part of it. He noticed that society rejects two types of men: those who attack it and those who protect it. He had to choose between these two types. Besides, he was inflexible and incorruptible, and he hated his bohemian background. Hence, he became a policeman; then he came up through the ranks and was appointed police inspector at the age of forty. It was said that, in his youth, he had worked at the penal colony of Toulon.

This man respected authority and hated rebellion. He considered that murder, robbery, and all crimes were forms of rebellion. This blind faith led him to believe that all civil servants were demigods. He had secretly investigated Mr. Madeleine's past. Sometimes he alluded to a certain person who had gleaned information about a certain family that lived in a certain place. On one occasion, he involuntarily murmured: 'There is evidence against him!' Javert was but a suspicious, inquisitive eye constantly fixed on Mr. Madeleine. The Mayor knew it, but he did not care. He did not even try to know why Inspector Javert behaved in that fashion. He treated him with respect and courtesy, as he did with the other inhabitants of Montreuil-sur-mer.

CHAPTER III: MR. FAUCHELEVENT.

Mr. Madeleine was walking along an unpaved street of Montreuil-sur-mer when he heard a noise and saw a group of people. He approached: an old man named Fauchelevent had just fallen beneath his cart. This man was one of Mr. Madeleine's opponents. When Madeleine arrived in the city, Fauchelevent, an ex-clerk and an educated farmer, was running a business that was going downhill. He saw this worker grow rich, whereas he, a businessman, got poorer. He was jealous and kept on besmirching Mr. Madeleine’s reputation. Then his business went bankrupt, which forced him to become a carter.

The horse had two broken legs and could not rise. The old man was lying under the cart, which was resting on his chest. He was groaning in pain. They had tried in vain to pull him. An awkward movement could kill him. The only way to free him was to lift the vehicle. Javert, who had come up when the accident had happened, had sent someone for a jack.

Mr. Madeleine arrived. People moved aside respectfully.

-'Help!', cried Fauchelevent.

Mr. Madeleine turned to them:

-'Does anyone have a jack?'

-'Someone is going to bring us one', answered a farmer.

-'How long will it take?'

-'About a quarter of an hour.'

-'A quarter of an hour!', exclaimed Mr. Madeleine. 'It is impossible to wait for a quarter of an hour.’

-'There is no other solution', said a farmer.

-'Listen', resumed Mr. Madeleine, 'a man can slip underneath the cart and lift it with his back. It will only take a few seconds. Is there anyone here who has a strong back? He will be rewarded with five francs!’

Nobody moved.

-'Well', continued Mr. Madeleine, 'would you be more courageous if I gave you twenty francs.'

They did not utter a word.

-'They are courageous', said a voice.

Mr. Madeleine turned around and recognized Inspector Javert.

Javert went on:

-'But they are not really strong. Mr. Madeleine, there is only one man who can do what you are asking them to do.'

Mr. Madeleine began to shiver as Javert added:

-'He was a convict.'

-'Ah!', exclaimed Mr. Madeleine.

-'He had been incarcerated in the Toulon correctional facility.'

Mr. Madeleine turned pale and Mr. Fauchelevent cried:

-'I am suffocating! My ribs are about to break! A jack! Something! Ah!'

Mr. Madeleine raised his head, met Javert's inquisitorial eye, looked at the motionless farmers and smiled sadly. Then, silently, he kneeled down and slipped underneath the vehicle. Suddenly, the enormous mass quivered and the cart rose slowly. A feeble voice said: 'Hurry up! Help him!' It was Mr. Madeleine, who was panting. They darted towards him. The cart was lifted by twenty arms. Fauchelevent was saved. The old man kissed Mr. Madeleine's hand and called him 'my savior'. Mr. Madeleine peeped at Javert, who stared at him.

Mr. Fauchelevent had dislocated his kneecap when he had fallen. Mr. Madeleine had him conveyed to the hospital which he had established for his workers. On the following morning, the old man found one thousand francs on his bedside table; there was also a note, written by Mr. Madeleine, saying that he was thus compensated for the loss of the horse and the cart. Once he had

recovered, Mr. Madeleine got him a job as a gardener in a convent situated in *Saint Anthony district*, in Paris.

CHAPTER IV: MRS. VICTURNIEN.

Fantine found employment in Mr. Madeleine's factory. When she realized that she could earn money, she felt happy, for she could live with dignity thanks to her salary. Since she was not married, she hid the existence of her daughter, but she sent lots of letters to the Thénardiers, which piqued the curiosity of her female colleagues. Hence, they spied on her and noticed that she used to turn aside in order to wipe her tears with a tissue. Was she thinking about her child or the man she had loved?

So they managed to obtain the address that was written on the envelopes by having the letter writer drink red wine; this wino even told them that Fantine had a child. Thereafter, an old shrew went to Montfermeil, talked to the Thénardiers, and said on her return: 'It cost me thirty five francs, but I clarified the situation: I saw the child!' This woman was a gorgon named Mrs. Victurnien; she had set herself up as the guardian of everybody's virtue. It was she who had informed the female supervisor of Fantine's sin.

One morning, the supervisor handed her fifty francs, told her that she had been dismissed, and asked her, in the name of the Mayor (who had not been informed), to leave the city. The shamefaced girl left the workroom and went home. Now, everybody knew her secret.

Fantine tried to get a job as a servant, but no one hired her. So she decided to sew shirts for the soldiers who were garrisoned in the city. She earned twelve cents a day and her daughter's lodging cost her ten cents a day. She began to pay the Thénardiers irregularly. Her neighbor taught her how to live in misery. Fantine learned how to live without heating, lighting, or hope.

Mrs. Victurnien sometimes saw her through the windowpane and noticed that she was in a predicament. However, she was glad that she had put her in her place. Wicked women delight in other people's sorrow.

CHAPTER V: FANTINE'S ORDEAL.

Fantine did not earn enough money and she was in debt. The Thénardiers kept on writing reproachful letters. On one occasion, they wrote that her little Cosette needed clothes and asked her to send them ten francs so that they might buy her a woolen skirt. In the evening, she entered a barbershop and removed her hairpins. Her admirable golden hair fell to her knees.

-'Madam, your hair is beautiful!', exclaimed the barber.

-'How much will you pay for it?', she asked.

-'Ten francs.'

-'Cut it off.'

She purchased a woolen skirt and sent it to the Thénardiers. This skirt made them furious. They wanted money. They gave it to Éponine. The poor lark continued to shiver.

On another occasion the Thénardiers sent her a letter which said: 'Cosette is sick. She suffers from milk fever. Expensive drugs are required: we cannot afford them. If you do not send us forty francs, your daughter will be dead by the end of the week.' So she asked her neighbor what a milk fever was. The woman told her that it was a serious disease.

That very evening, she went out and headed for Paris Street, where the dental laboratory was situated. The following morning, her neighbor Marguerite found Fantine seated on her bed: she was pale and looked like a pillar of salt. She had not slept. Her cap had fallen on her knees. Her candle had burned all night long. Marguerite stopped at the threshold of the room and exclaimed:

-'Oh Lord! The candle is burned out! Something happened.'

Then she looked at the girl, who turned her bald, wrinkled head to her.

-'Jesus!', said Marguerite. 'What is the matter with you?'

-'Nothing', replied Fantine, 'Everything is fine. My child will not die of that frightful disease for lack of medicine.'

She pointed out two gold coins, which were glittering on the table.

-'Gosh', cried Marguerite, 'Where did you find this hidden treasure?'

-'I earned this money', replied Fantine.

At that moment, she smiled. The candle illuminated her face. Reddish saliva soiled her lips; a black hole made her look ugly: the maxillary central incisors had been extracted!

She sent the forty francs to Montfermeil. The gold coins were not used to cure Cosette's disease, for she was not ill. The Thénardiers had played a dirty trick on her to get some money.

Fantine's creditors began to harass her. She kept crying. She sewed seventeen hours a day and earned only nine cents. She felt persecuted. Then Mr. Thénardier asked her to send him one hundred francs or else he would kick Cosette out. How could she earn so much money?

-'Well', said she, 'let's sell the rest.'

The unfortunate girl became a prostitute!

CHAPTER VI: JAVERT IN ACTION.

Eight or ten months elapsed. At the beginning of January 1823, on a snowy evening, a middle-class man who gave himself airs teased a woman dressed in a low-

cut evening gown. She was pacing up and down. This dandy was smoking, for it was in fashion.

Each time she walked past him, he puffed smoke towards her and made a wisecrack such as: 'You are so ugly; you resemble a toothless white rabbit!' This gentleman was Mr. Bamatabois. The woman did not speak to him; she did not even look at him. This indifference cut him to the quick; he picked up a handful of snow and thrust it into her evening gown. She shrieked, turned around, rushed at the man and scratched him savagely. Then the drunken woman hurled insults at him. This vixen was Fantine.

A great many onlookers gathered in front of a pathetic whirlwind: a man and a woman were fighting! The crowd applauded and shouted. The dandy made his escape when a tall man seized the woman's satin bodice and said to her: 'Follow me!' The woman raised her head and froze: she had recognized Inspector Javert.

Javert forced the onlookers to step aside and strode off, dragging her to the police station. Then he issued a warrant for her arrest saying:

-'You'll be locked up for six months.' The poor woman shuddered.

-'Six months, six months in jail!', she exclaimed, 'and I won't make any money! But what will become of Cosette? My daughter! My daughter! But I still owe the Thénardiers one hundred francs; sir, do you know that?'

She threw herself at his feet and implored him:

-'Mr. Javert, take pity on me. I was right. I swear to God that I was right. It is he who put snow in my dress and insulted me. However, I am willing to admit that I shouldn’t have damaged that gentleman’s hat. I will apologize to him. Mr. Javert, you could wipe the slate clean. Besides, one doesn't make money in prison: if I don't pay one hundred francs, they will kick my daughter out. Oh Cosette, my angel! What will become of her? Please sir, take pity on her: she is so young, innocent and vulnerable. You see, I am not naturally evil. Neither

cowardliness nor gluttony made me who I am today. I drink because I am poor. Take pity on me, Mr. Javert!'

-'Well', said Javert, 'I have listened to you. You'll be locked up for six months. God himself could not save you.'

She fell to her knees and whispered: 'Help!'

Javert turned around. Two policemen seized her arms. In the meantime, a man entered the police station, but nobody noticed him. When the policemen seized the arms of the unfortunate woman, he took a step forward and said:

-'Could you wait for a moment, please?'

Javert looked up and recognized Mr. Madeleine. He removed his hat and greeted him.

-'Mr. Mayor...'

The words 'Mr. Mayor' upset Fantine. She rose from her chair, pushed the policemen back, walked straight towards Mr. Madeleine and cried:

-'Ah, you are the mayor!'

Then she burst into laughter and spat at him.

Mr. Madeleine wiped his face and said:

-'Inspector Javert, release this woman.'

The inspector turned pale: a prostitute had spat in the mayor's face! It was hell on earth. He whispered:

-'Impossible...'

-'Why?', inquired Mr. Madeleine.

-'This woman insulted a wealthy citizen.'

-'Inspector Javert', replied the mayor calmly, 'I was in the crowd when the incident took place. It was the gentleman who was in the wrong; you should have arrested him.'

Javert retorted:

-'This harpy has just insulted you.'

-'It's my business', said Mr. Madeleine.

-'Sir, this is a matter of justice: this insult belongs to justice now. '

Mr. Madeleine folded his arms and said stiffly:

-'This is a matter of municipal police. According to the *Code of Criminal Procedure*, this issue is within my

remit, not yours. Hence, I command you to release this woman.'

Javert was speechless with rage, but he bowed to him and left the room. Mr. Madeleine turned to her and said:

-'I will pay off your debts; I will take care of you and your child, and you won't have to work anymore.'

Fantine was dazed; she looked at him and started to sob. She felt dizzy. So she grasped the mayor's hand and fainted.

BOOK SIXTH: JAVERT.

CHAPTER I: THE BEGINNING OF REPOSE.

Mr. Madeleine had Fantine carried to the factory's infirmary. She had a high fever. The sisters put her to bed. She woke up at 12. She heard someone breathing close to her bed; she drew the bed curtains and saw Mr. Madeleine looking at the crucifix that hung above her head. He had been there for an hour. He took her hand and inquired:

-'How do you feel?'

-'Well, I have slept; I feel better; I think that I will recover.'

That very evening, Javert wrote a letter. He posted it on the following morning. He had written on the envelope: 'Mr. Chabouillet, Secretary of the Police Prefect for the district of Paris.' Since all the inhabitants of Montreuil-sur-mer knew what had happened at the police station, the postmistress believed that it was his resignation letter.

As for Mr. Madeleine, he wrote to the Thénardiers. Fantine owed them one hundred and twenty francs. He sent them three hundred francs and asked them to bring the child with them.

In the meantime, Fantine did not recover. She still remained in the infirmary. Mr. Madeleine would see her twice a day, and each time she asked:

-'Will I see my Cosette soon?'

He would answer:

-'Tomorrow, perhaps. I am expecting her.'

Mr. Thénardier was dragging his feet because he did not want to let the golden goose go.

-'I will ask someone to fetch her!', said Mr. Madeleine. 'If necessary, I will go myself.'

Then he wrote a letter to the Thénardiers in order to compel them to obey.

In the meantime, a serious incident occurred.

CHAPTER II: JEAN LOOKS LIKE CHAMP.

One morning, Police Inspector Javert asked for Mr. Madeleine, who was in his study. Javert entered it, bowed to the mayor and said:

-'Mr. Mayor, a misdemeanor has been committed.'

-'What kind of misdemeanor?'

-'A civil servant has been disrespectful to a politician.'

-'Who is the civil servant?'

-'It is I.'

-'You?'

-'Yes, it is I.'

-'And who is the politician?'

-'It is you, Mr. Mayor... Mr. Mayor, I have come to ask you to dismiss me.'

-'But why?'

-'Six weeks ago, after the unpleasant occurrence that involved that woman, I wrote to the Police Prefect for the district of Paris in order to tell him that you were an ex-convict.'

The mayor turned pale.

-'As a matter of fact, I mistook you for Jean Valjean.'

-'Who is he?'

-'An ex-convict. I met him twenty years ago; I worked at the penal colony of Toulon. It is said that he robbed a bishop and a little Savoyard. He disappeared eight years ago...'

-'And what did the Prefect reply?'

-'That I was mad.'

-'Was he right?'

-'Yes, he was.'

-'Fortunately, you acknowledge that you were wrong.'

-'I feel morally compelled to do so since the real Jean Valjean is in prison.'

-'Really?'

-'Apparently! A poor man called Mr. Champmathieu was arrested last winter. He was taken to the departmental prison of Arras. In this prison there is an ex-convict named Brevet. No sooner had Champmathieu arrived than Brevet exclaimed: "I know that man. He is an ex-con. His name is Jean Valjean!" Champmathieu acted surprised. "Quit playing innocent, dude", said Brevet, "twenty years ago, we were at the penal colony of Toulon together." The police investigated the case and discovered that Champmathieu was a pruner who had worked in Faverolles like Jean Valjean! Moreover, Valjean's first name is Jean, and his mother's surname is Mathieu. Hence, it can be inferred that he concealed his identity and pretended that his name was "Jean Mathieu". Then he went to *Auvergne*: the inhabitants called him Champmathieu because of their pronunciation. Many years have passed and nobody in Faverolles knows Jean Valjean. However, in Toulon, two inmates named *Cochepaille* and *Chenildieu* know him very well. Hence, they saw him and told the police that this Champmathieu is Jean Valjean. So, I went to Arras to verify the information...'

-'Well?', interposed Mr. Madeleine.

-'Mr. Mayor, I must face the truth: I recognized him!'

-'Are you sure?'

-'Yes, I am. … I don't understand why I made this strange mistake... I beg your pardon, Mr. Mayor.'

Mr. Madeleine turned to his desk again, looked at his papers and said to Inspector Javert:

-'Inspector Javert, you are a man of integrity, which is why I think highly of you. You exaggerate your fault. People like you deserve a promotion. I want you to remain in office.'

BOOK SEVENTH: THE CHAMPMATHIEU AFFAIR.

CHAPTER I: MR. SCAUFFLAIRE.

Mr. Madeleine visited Fantine and then headed for the other side of the town in order to meet Mr. Scaufflaire, a Flemish man who rented out horses and coaches.

-'Mr. Scaufflaire', said the mayor, 'have you got a good horse?'

-'Mr. Mayor, all my horses are good. What do you mean by *a good horse*?'

-'I mean a horse that can walk twenty leagues in one day.'

-'Wow! Twenty leagues!'

-'Yes.'

-'Hitched to a cabriolet?'

-'Yes.'

-'And how long will the horse rest at the end of its journey?'

-'It must be able to set off on the next day if necessary.'

-'To walk the same distance?'

-'Yes.'

-'Mr. Mayor', resumed the Flemish man, 'I have what you need: a White Marble Horse. It is very robust and as gentle as a mare; moreover, it goes fast.'

-'So, can it take this trip?'

-'Absolutely! But, halfway between here and where you are going, the horse will have to stop for half an hour and eat. Besides, you will travel alone and without luggage: we mustn't overload the horse.'

-'All right.'

-'It will cost you thirty francs a day, plus the horse's food.'

Mr. Madeleine handed him three gold coins.

-'A cabriolet will be too heavy. So you will travel in a tilbury.'

-'I will do so. Come to my place tomorrow morning at half-past four with the tilbury and the horse.'

Mr. Madeleine returned home and shut himself in his bedroom.

CHAPTER II: A HINDRANCE.

Mr. Madeleine had been pacing the room for five hours when three o'clock struck; he sat down, fell asleep and dreamt. Then he woke up, stood up and drew close to the window. Suddenly, he heard a noise that came from the street. What was it? He saw two glowing lights. It was a carriage.

Someone knocked at the door.

-'Who is it?'

-'It is I, sir.'

He recognized the voice of the caretaker.

-'What is it?'

-'The cabriolet.'

-'What cabriolet?'

-'The tilbury.'

-'What tilbury?'

-'The tilbury you have booked?'

-'But I haven't booked a tilbury.'

-'The coachman told me that...'

-'What coachman?'

-'Mr. Scaufflaire's coachman.'

-'Mr. Scaufflaire!... Ah, yes, Mr. Scaufflaire! Tell him that I am coming down.'

On that night, the Arras mail coach that was heading towards Montreuil-sur-mer hit the wheel of a tilbury drawn by a white horse. The coachman shouted so that the tilbury might stop, but the traveler continued on his way at full gallop.

It was daylight when Jean Valjean reached Hesdin. He stopped in front of an inn. Even though the horse was fine, it needed to rest, drink and eat. Jean did not get out of the tilbury. The stableman who brought the oat bent down suddenly and examined the left wheel.

-'Are you going far?', inquired the man.

-'Why?'

The stableman pointed at the damaged wheel.

-'My friend, is there a wheelwright here?'

-'There is one, sir.'

-'Could you go get him, please?'

The wheelwright's workshop was next to the inn. Mr. Bourgaillard saw them. So he approached, greeted them and examined the wheel.

-'Can you repair this wheel right now?', asked Mr. Madeleine.

-'Yes, sir.'

-'When will it be fixed?'

-'Tomorrow.'

-'Tomorrow! I can't wait until tomorrow… Is there anyone in this village who rents out carts and horses?'

-'No, sir.'

At that moment, an old woman came up to them and said:

-'Sir, I own a pony phaeton.'

-'A pony phaeton: you must be joking!', interjected the wheelwright. 'There are neither shock absorbers nor a roof, and the seat is not comfortable.'

It was true, but this ramshackle vehicle could carry him to Arras. So Jean paid for it, climbed into it and resumed his journey.

He reached Tinques at sunset. There he took an extra horse and was able to speed up the pony phaeton. In fact, he kept whipping the horses.

CHAPTER III: SISTER SIMPLICE IS PUT TO THE TEST.

In the meantime, Fantine was happy.

She had had a bad night's sleep because she had had a high fever and had coughed a lot. When the doctor visited her, she was delirious. She kept on reciting numbers that looked like distances. Each time Sister Simplice asked her how she felt, she replied: 'I'm fine. I would like to see Mr. Madeleine.'

The mayor used to come and see her at three o'clock. So when three o'clock struck, Fantine sat up in bed, but Mr. Madeleine did not come, and when five o'clock struck, sister Simplice herself was surprised at Mr. Madeleine's lateness. The nun asked the doorkeeper if she had seen the mayor. The women murmured that he had left at six o'clock, that he was on his own, and that no one knew where he was going.

-'You are speaking of Mr. Madeleine!', said Fantine, 'Why are you talking in whispers? What is he doing? Why isn't he here yet?'

The doorkeeper stammered:

-'He has gone away.'

-'Gone away!', cried Fantine. 'He is going to fetch Cosette!'

She raised her arms to heaven and smiled radiantly.

-'It's been five years since I last saw her; I miss her so much. She must be a big girl now: she is seven. Tomorrow morning, sister, don't forget to remind me to put my lace cap on. Montfermeil is so far away, but stagecoaches go fast! They will be here tomorrow; what's the distance between Montreuil-sur-mer and Montfermeil?'

The sister, who did not know the answer, replied:

-'Oh, I think that they will be here tomorrow.'

-'Tomorrow, tomorrow!', said Fantine, 'I will see Cosette tomorrow! Sister, I am no longer ill; I am overjoyed...'

Fantine did not cough anymore; her blood pressure was higher; the breath of life had suddenly enlivened this worn-out creature. The sister said to the doorkeeper:

-'She is getting better. Happiness can cure diseases sometimes. Her child might save her...'

CHAPTER IV: THE TRIAL.

It was nearly eight o'clock in the evening when the cart arrived at the post house of Arras. Jean led the horses into the stables. Then he opened the door of a billiard room which was situated on the ground floor; he sat down and rested his elbows on a table. The landlady entered and asked to see his passport. He gave it to her and asked her where the criminal court was. An old man heard the question and offered to take him there.

Once he had arrived, Jean showed his passport to the guard, took a piece of paper, wrote something on it, handed it to him and said confidently:

-'Give this to the judge.'

The man took the piece of paper, looked at it and obeyed.

Since the mayor of Montreuil-sur-mer was a famous politician, the Councilor of the Royal Court of

Douai, who was presiding over this session, allowed him to attend the end of the court hearing.

When he entered the courtroom, the defendant's lawyer had just finished his plea. The crowd had been watching a brute or someone who pretended to be one for three hours. This so-called Jean Valjean was a vagabond who had broken a branch and stolen apples in the Pierron orchard. All the witnesses described him as a marauder, a thief, a dangerous criminal who had stolen money from a child, namely Little Gervais. However, his lawyer had pointed out that nothing proved that this man had stolen those apples, for there were no eyewitnesses. In fact, he had neither broken the branch nor taken the apples: he had just picked up the branch of an apple tree that was lying on the ground and obstructed the road. As for the identity of his client, he agreed with the four witnesses who had recognized Champmathieu as Jean Valjean.

Since the hearing was drawing to a close, the Presiding judge asked the defendant the usual question: 'Do you want to add a piece of information that may redound to your benefit?'

-'I just want to say', retorted the man, 'that you are nasty! That's what I want to tell you. I have stolen nothing. I just picked up a broken branch with apples on it. I am not Jean Valjean; my name is Champmathieu. Besides, I am not an ex-con. Why are you persecuting me?'

All of a sudden, Mr. Madeleine rose to his feet and said:

-'Your Honor, release this man! I am Jean Valjean! You will find the forty-cent coin I stole seven years ago from Little Gervais in my bedroom, in the fireplace. Gentlemen, I am guilty. Send me to prison.'

The judges, prosecutors and policemen acknowledged that he was Jean Valjean. They realized that he was giving himself up to the police in order to save a man from injustice.

-'I don't want to disturb you more', resumed Jean Valjean. 'So I am going to leave since you do not want to put me under arrest. The prosecuting attorney knows who I am and where I am going; he will have me arrested whenever he wishes.'

He came up to the door and exited. They all remained silent; nobody tried to stop him. Less than an hour later, Mr. Champmathieu was acquitted of all the charges against him. The poor man was bemused; he kept repeating: they are crazy, completely crazy!

BOOK EIGHTH: THE ENSUING EVENTS.

CHAPTER I: FANTINE IS HAPPY.

-'How is she?', asked Jean.

-'Fine', answered sister Simplice. 'However, she was so restless yesterday that we told her that you were going to Montfermeil to take Cosette home.'

-'It was a good idea.'

-'Yes, but she will see you and won't see Cosette. What will we tell her?'

-'God will help us.'

-'But we cannot tell a lie', murmured the sister.

-'Can I see her?'

-'She is asleep, but you may enter.'

He entered Fantine's bedroom and drew the bed curtains. She was asleep. He sat down. She looked serene even though she could hardly breathe. The colour of her skin resembled that of a Greek statue, but her cheeks were rosy. She opened her eyes, saw him, and asked:

-'Where is Cosette?'

The physician entered the room.

-'Be quiet! Your child has arrived', said he.

-'Oh!', she exclaimed. 'Bring her here!'

-'For the time being, you are too weak. You cannot see her. You must recover first.'

-'But I am fine! I want to see my daughter.'

-'You are too restless. When you are reasonable and quiet, I will bring her here.'

Mr. Madeleine was sitting on a chair beside the bed. She turned to him and said:

-'I hope you had a pleasant journey, Mr. Madeleine. Did the Thénardiers take good care of her? Did she eat enough? Is she pretty?'

-'Cosette is pretty and in good health', he answered.

-'We will be happy. We will have a small garden... I like flowers... Cosette will play in the garden. I guess she knows how to read and write. By the way, she must receive the First Communion. How old is she? One, two, three, four... she is seven years old.'

Suddenly, she fell silent. Jean raised his head. Her terrified eyes were looking in the distance.

-'Good Lord!', he exclaimed. 'What's wrong?'

She did not answer him; she just pointed at the door.

He turned around and saw Javert.

CHAPTER II: JAVERT IS HAPPY.

Mr. Madeleine had left the Criminal Court of Arras at half past twelve. He had returned to the post house to take the mail coach. A little before six o'clock in the morning, he had arrived at Montreuil-sur-mer.

Immediately after the acquittal, the prosecuting attorney and the presiding judge agreed on Mr. Madeleine's incarceration. An arrest warrant was sent to Inspector Javert.

On that day, Javert was accompanied by a police officer and four soldiers. He told the soldiers to stand

guard in front of the entrance door. The caretaker pointed at Fantine's bedroom; he turned the handle gently and entered.

Fantine looked up; Mr. Madeleine turned around and met Javert's gaze. Satan had just found a damned soul. His face lit up; he was in heaven, for justice, light and truth had defeated evil. Fantine had not seen Javert since the Bamatabois affair. She thought that he had come to catch her. She cried:

-'Mr. Madeleine, save me!'

-'Don't worry! He has come here to arrest me.'

-'You are under arrest', said Javert.

-'Please, Inspector Javert, allow me to fetch the child of this unfortunate woman.'

Fantine started to shiver.

-'My child, I want to see my child! Sister, where is Cosette? Mr. Mayor...'

-'Shut up!', said Javert, 'This crazy world in which ex-cons are mayors and in which prostitutes are treated like ladies is about to change!'

Fantine gazed at Jean Valjean, Javert and the nun; she opened her mouth: a death rattle came out of her mouth... She closed he eyes...

-'You have killed that woman', said Jean.

-'What an ordeal!', shouted Javert, 'I am here to arrest you. Follow me! The guards and justice are waiting for you.'

Jean grasped an iron bed stick. Javert froze. He looked at Fantine and spoke to her in a low voice. Did the dead woman hear him? Then he carefully placed Fantine's head on her pillow, fastened the buttons of her blouse and adjusted her cap. He knelt down, lifted Fantine's hand gently and kissed it.

He rose to his feet, turned to Javert and said:

-'Now, I am at your disposal.'

CHAPTER III: A SUITABLE TOMB.

Javert dropped Jean Valjean at the prison.

The arrest of Mr. Madeleine caused a stir. His friends deserted him; almost all the inhabitants of Montreuil-sur-mer forgot what he had done for the city.

Late in the evening, the caretaker who worked in Mr. Madeleine's factory stood up and took the key to his bedroom and an old candlestick. She hung the key on a nail and set the candlestick on a pedestal table. Then she sat on her chair.

A few moments later, the small window of the lodge opened; a hand seized the key and the candlestick. She looked up and murmured:

-'Good Lord! Mr. Mayor! I thought you were...'

-'... In prison', interposed Jean. 'Actually, I have escaped. I am going to my bedroom; go get Sister Simplice.'

The old woman obeyed.

He took the stairs two at a time and opened his bedroom door. He set the two iron tips of his walking stick and the forty-cent coin that had been blackened by the fire on a sheet of paper on which he wrote: 'Here are the two tips of my cane and the forty-cent coin stolen from Little Gervais'. Then he wrapped the two silver candlesticks.

Sister Simplice knocked at the door and entered. Jean gave her a letter. She read it; it said:

-'Father, please take care of my belongings. You will find enough money to pay my lawyer and the funeral of the woman who died yesterday. The rest is for the poor.'

They heard footsteps and the old caretaker say:

-'Sir, I swear that this house is empty.'

Jean Valjean blew out the candle and hid behind the door. Sister Simplice fell to her knees. The door

opened. Javert entered. The nun did not look up. She was praying.

-'Sister', said Javert, 'are you alone in this room?'

The sister answered:

-'Yes, of course.'

-'Sister, a dangerous man has escaped; did you see a man prowling around the factory?'

-'No, I didn't.'

-'Pardon me', said Javert; he bowed to her and exited.

An hour later, a passer-by saw Jean take the stagecoach to Paris. As for Fantine, she was buried in a common grave. In fact, God does not need inscriptions, for he always succeeds in identifying the souls. On that day, the bells did not toll, the birds did not sing, the mourners did not cry, but a fugitive prayed and tried to keep his word.

Volume 2:

COSETTE.

BOOK FIRST: THE ORION.

CHAPTER I: NUMBER 24 601 BECAME NUMBER 9 430.

Jean Valjean had been recaptured. The 25th of July 1823, *The White Flag* published an article on that topic. The journalist wrote:

'A man named Madeleine had revived Montreuil-sur-Mer's economy thanks to a new technique. He had made his fortune manufacturing black glass trinkets. He had been appointed mayor in recognition of his achievements. The police discovered that Mr. Madeleine was Jean Valjean, an ex-convict who had been convicted of theft in 1796. He has been taken straight back to prison. It is said that, prior to his arrest, he had

withdrawn 500 000 francs from his bank account. Nobody knows where the money is.'

On the same day, the *Journal of Paris* published a more detailed article. It stated:

'An ex-convict named Jean Valjean appeared before the Criminal Court of Draguigan. This evildoer escaped the vigilance of the police, changed his name, built a flourishing business and became mayor of Montreuil-sur-Mer. He was arrested thanks to the indefatigable zeal of the public prosecutor. He was romantically involved with a prostitute; she died when the police arrested him. This scoundrel escaped, but the police captured him in Paris as he was getting in the stagecoach to Montfermeil. We assume that he had time to withdraw six or seven hundred thousand francs from his bank account and to hide the money. However, Jean Valjean was charged with armed robbery; the victim was a young Savoyard. This bandit refused to defend himself against the accusations. The public prosecutor proved that the defendant belonged to a gang and that the Little Gervais affair was just the tip of the iceberg. Jean Valjean was found guilty and was sentenced to death. This criminal refused to lodge an appeal. The lenient king commuted his death sentence to life imprisonment. Jean Valjean was thus taken to the penal colony of Toulon.'

When he arrived at the Toulon correctional facility, Jean Valjean became number 9 430.

CHAPTER II: HE BROKE THE CHAIN.

At the end of October 1823, a ship named the Orion berthed in Toulon, for it had to be repaired. Hence, they moored near the dockyard.

One morning, the onlookers who were admiring it witnessed an accident.

The crew was bending the sails to their yards. The topman lost his balance; the crowd cried out in horror. He

grasped a footrope and began to sway. The sailors did not dare to help him. The unfortunate man's arms were aching. He tried to get back on the yard, but he increased the oscillations of the footrope. All of a sudden, a man climbed nimbly the rigging. He was clad in red, for he was a convict. He was wearing a green cap. He was serving a life sentence. He reached the fighting top; a gust of wind carried his cap away; his hair was as white as the driven snow.

The officer had given him permission to break the chain attached to his ankle and to rescue the topman. Nobody had noticed that he had broken it easily.

The convict looked toward heaven and took a step forward: the crowd held its breath. He ran toward the end of the yard. He fastened a rope to it, dropped the other end and began to rope down. He reached the sailor, hauled him up onto the yard, and carried him to the fighting top. His mates greeted him warmly; the crowd broke into applause.

The convict climbed down a rope ladder, walked on a yard, slipped and fell into the sea. The onlookers screamed. The fall was terrible. The frigate HMS Algeciras was alongside the Orion; the poor convict had fallen between the two vessels. Four men flung themselves into a rowboat, inspected the area, and looked under the hull, but they did not find his body.

On the following day, the *Gazette of Toulon* published this note:

'Nov. 17, 1823. Yesterday, a prisoner who was cleaning the upper deck of the Orion risked life and limb to rescue a sailor. He fell into the sea and drowned. The body has not been found yet. It is supposed that it is stuck under the piles of the quay. This man's service number was 9 430; his name was Jean Valjean.'

BOOK SECOND:
THE FULFILLMENT
OF A PROMISE.

CHAPTER I: A PORTRAIT OF TWO ORDINARY MONSTERS.

Mr. Thénardier was fifty; Mrs. Thénardier was almost forty. She was a red-haired colossus who did everything around the house. Cosette was her only servant; a mouse was the servant of an elephant! Her stentorian voice made everything tremble. Her freckled face displayed... a beard! She swore like a trooper, spoke like a French policeman, drank like a bottomless pit and ill-treated people like an executioner. She was neither a lady, nor a woman, nor a man; she was an ogress.

Mr. Thénardier was a skinny little man who looked sick but who had a sound constitution. He was a polite smiling beech marten. Even though he kept on drinking with the carters, he was never drunk. He smoked a big pipe, wore an old black suit underneath his smock, and claimed to be a kind of scholar who had an interest in literature and materialism: he was a '*crookosopher*' indeed! He said that he had served with the infantry, at the battle of Waterloo, and had risked life and limb to rescue a general – hence the name of his establishment: 'the inn of the sergeant of Waterloo.'

I think that this rascal was a Fleming from Lille. He claimed to be a Frenchman when he was in Paris and a Belgian when he was in Brussels. He was an opportunist, a sutler who sold adulterated food to both sides of the battlefield, but his rickety cart always tried to follow the victorious army in order to rob the dead easily. After the

war, thanks to this dirty money, he had come to Montfermeil and set up shop.

Newcomers believed that Mrs. Thénardier wore the trousers, but it is he who was the boss: he whispered his orders and the mammoth obeyed. He was a tyrannical skinny king; she was a potbellied slave. She neither loved him nor liked him: she just feared him.

Mr. Thénardier wanted to get rich quickly and was quite unsuccessful: he owed fifteen hundred francs, which bothered him. Hence, he billed the customers for all the services he provided: even the fly in the soup had a price tag.

As for Cosette, she was mistreated by them: the ogress beat her and the beech marten starved her. She kept running, cleaning, sweeping and sweating. The inn was a spider's web. A midge had been caught. Cosette was trembling with fear: she did not want to be devoured by those two ferocious tarantulas. A soul was silently awaiting a savior.

CHAPTER II: MEN DRINK WINE AND HORSES DRINK WATER.

Four travelers had arrived.

Cosette was lost in thought. She had a black eye, for Mrs. Thénardier had beaten her up. She looked through the window: it was dark. She had filled the pitchers of the four travelers and there was no more water in the cistern.

She did not really worry about that since the customers did not drink much water. There were many thirsty people, but they drank wine. If a man had asked for a glass of water, the regular customers would have considered him to be a savage.

Mrs. Thénardier lifted a pan lid, took a glass and came up to the cistern. She turned on the faucet. The child stared at her. A few drops of water fell into the glass.

'Well', said she, 'there is no more water!' A brief silence ensued. The child froze.

-'Bah!', resumed Mrs. Thénardier, looking at the half-filled glass, 'that will do.'

All at once one of the peddlers entered and said in a harsh voice:

-'My horse has not been watered.'

-'It has', retorted Mrs. Thénardier.

-'It has not', added the peddler.

-'The horse has drunk a bucketful of water', said Cosette

-'You are as big as my fist and tell lies as big as this house', exclaimed the peddler. 'It has not been watered because its lips are dry. So go and water my horse.'

Cosette crept under the table.

-'Well', said Mrs. Thénardier, 'if this animal has not drunk, it must be watered.'

She looked around.

-'Where is that stupid child?'

She bent down, lifted the tablecloth and saw Cosette.

-'Miss Ugly Toad, go and water that horse.'

-'But, madam', whispered Cosette, 'there is no water.'

Mrs. Thénardier opened the front door and said:

-'Go to the spring then!'

Cosette looked down and picked up a big bucket.

-'Hurry up!', screamed Mrs. Thénardier.

Cosette went out. The door closed behind her.

CHAPTER III: IN DARKNESS.

The peddlers had lined up their tents from the church to the inn of the Thénardiers. These shops were decorated with multicolored Chinese lanterns, which was charming.

The last tent was next to the Thénardiers' hostelry. It was a toy shop that was full of tinsels, Christmas baubles and carved candles. In front of his shop, the merchant had placed an immense doll that wore a pink chiffon dress. Golden ringlets and enameled eyes adorned its porcelain countenance. This marvel had dazzled the passers-by below the age of ten all day long. This doll was not a doll but a vision, joy, splendor, wealth, and happiness.

As she walked past the tent, Cosette said to herself that this 'thingummy' belonged to a queen or at least a princess. She could not take her eyes off that fantastic tent, but she managed to cross a few streets and disappear in the distance.

She reached the spring, leaned against an oak tree and plunged the bucket into the water. She pulled the bucket out of the water and set it on the grass. The bucket was really heavy; she lifted it, walked a few steps and set it on the ground again. She strove hard to carry that bucket. In fact, she kept halting. All of a sudden, near an old chestnut tree, she lifted the bucket effortlessly, for a big hand had just seized the handle. She looked up: a black figure appeared.

-'Child, what you are carrying is very heavy', said the shadow.

Cosette looked up and replied:

-'Yes, it is.'

-'Give it to me; I will carry it.'

Cosette let go of the handle. They started to walk side by side.

-'It's really heavy... You seem very young; how old are you?'

-'Eight, sir.'

-'Why are you alone? Where is your mother?'

-'I don't know... I think that I don't have a mother.'

-'What is your name, child?'

-'Cosette, sir.'

The man turned pale.

-'Where do you live, Cosette?'

-'In Montfermeil.'

-'I assume that we are going there.'

-'Yes, sir.'

-'Who asked you to go get water in the forest at this late hour?'

-'Mrs. Thénardier.'

-'What does she do for a living?'

-'She manages the inn.'

-'The inn! Well, I will sleep there tonight. Show me the way. Is there a servant in Mrs Thénardier's inn?'

-'I am her servant.'

-'Are you the only child there?'

-'There are two other little girls: Éponine and Azelma.'

-'Who are they?'

-'They are Mrs. Thénardier's daughters.'

-'And what do they do all day long?'

-'Oh! They play with their beautiful doll.'

-'And you?'

-'I work.'

-'All day long?'

-'Yes, sir... Sometimes I play too!'

They reached Montfermeil. Cosette guided the stranger through the village. The man beheld the Chinese lanterns in the distance; he asked Cosette:

-'Is this a fair?'

-'No, sir; it is a Christmas market.'

As they approached the inn, Cosette timidly touched his arm:

-'Sir?'

-'What?'

-'We are close to the inn.'

-'Well?'

-'Would you mind giving me the bucket back?'

-'Why?'

-'If Mrs. Thénardier sees that I have not carried it, she will beat me.'

The man handed her the bucket.

CHAPTER IV: PEOPLE NEVER LIKE TO MEET A POOR MAN WHO IS NOT REALLY POOR.

Cosette knocked at the door. The door opened. Mrs. Thénardier appeared with a candle in her hand.

-'So it's you, you little wretch! You've taken your time! Why are you so late?'

-'Madam', said Cosette, shaking with fear, 'here is a gentleman who needs a room.'

Mrs. Thénardier's wild face turned into the silly grin of the innkeeper.

-'Come in, my good man', she said.

The 'good man' entered. Mrs. Thénardier looked at him; she noticed his battered hat and the threadbare yellow riding coat; she turned to her husband, who moved discreetly his forefinger. Mrs. Thénardier exclaimed:

-'I am sorry, but the inn is fully booked.'

-'Put me in the attic', said the man, 'or in the stable. I will pay full price.'

-'It's forty cents.'

-'Fair enough, I'll pay forty cents.'

-'By the way, would you like to have dinner?', inquired Mrs. Thénardier.

He did not answer: he was lost in thought.

A door opened: Éponine and Azelma entered. They started to play with their doll. Cosette gazed at them; they ignored her; once again envy looked at disdain. Mrs. Thénardier noticed that Cosette was gazing at her daughters' doll instead of working.

-'Ah! That's the way you work! Have you seen the whip on the wall?'

-'Bah', said the man, 'let her play!'

-'She must work since she eats. She must earn her living.'

-'What is she knitting?'

-'A pair of stockings for Azelma.'

-'How much will that pair of stockings be worth when she has finished knitting them?'

-'Thirty cents at least.'

-'Will you sell them to me if I give you five francs?', went on the man.

-'Yes, I will, but you will have to pay right now.'

He took a five-franc coin from his pocket and laid it on the table. Then he turned to Cosette.

-'Now I own your work; you can play, child.'

-'Is it true, madam?', said Cosette, 'May I play?'

-'Yes, you may!', retorted Mrs. Thénardier.

-'Thanks, madam', added Cosette.

Mr. Thénardier sipped at his glass; his wife whispered in his ear:

-'Who is he?'

-'A millionaire dressed in rags!'

Mrs. Thénardier came up to the man.

-'You see, this girl is poor, which is why she must work.'

-'Is she your daughter?', asked the man.

-'Oh, no! She is a young beggar whom we have taken in. She is a mentally retarded girl: there is water in her brain! Look at her big head... You see? We do everything possible to raise her, but we are not rich. We wrote to her mother, but she has not answered yet: she might be dead or in prison! She is a bad mother: she abandoned her child!'

Cosette caught sight of the little girls' doll: it was lying on the floor. She dropped her sword, looked around, discretely crawled towards the doll, seized it and went back to her hiding place. She played with it for a quarter of an hour. Unfortunately, Azelma saw the leg of the doll underneath a tablecloth. She sneaked up on her mother, tug at her skirt and pointed at Cosette.

Mrs. Thénardier yelled 'Cosette'.

Cosette took the doll and set it gently on the floor. Then she gazed at the contorted puppet and burst into tears.

The traveler rose to his feet and said to Mrs. Thénardier:

-'What is the matter?'

-'This ragamuffin has touched the doll of my daughters!'

-'It's much ado about nothing!'

The man went straight to the front door, opened it and exited. When the door opened again, the man was carrying the fabulous doll I mentioned earlier. He set it upright in front of Cosette and said:

-'This is for you.'

Cosette stopped crying. She looked at him and at the precious doll; then she moved back and hid under a table. The Thénardiers and the customers stopped talking. Mrs. Thénardier bent her head toward her husband and said in a low voice:

-'He must be crazy: he has bought her a forty-franc doll!'

-'He must be a philanthropist', murmured Mr. Thénardier, 'a wealthy man who squanders his money. We just have to pick up the gold coins and shut up!'

It was late. Mr. Thénardier asked the stranger whether he wanted to go to bed.

-'Oh yes, it is time to go to bed', said he. 'Show me to the stable.'

-'Sir', the innkeeper said with a smile, 'would you mind following me.'

Mr. Thénardier took a candle and led the man to a large bedroom with mahogany furniture and purple velvet curtains.

-'This room is cosier than the stable', the innkeeper added.

Then he retired to his bedroom. His wife was not asleep. She said to him:

-'Tomorrow I'll kick Cosette out!'

CHAPTER V: THE SHENANIGANS OF MR. THÉNARDIER.

The following morning, two hours before daybreak, Mr. Thénardier wrote this masterpiece:

BILL OF THE GENTLEMAN IN ROOM Nº 1.

Dinner: 3 francs.
Room: 10 francs.
Candle: 5 francs.
Fire: 4 francs.
Service: 1 franc.

TOTAL: 23 francs.

-'Twenty-three francs!', cried his wife, 'this is an expensive bill; he will not pay it.'

-'He will pay it', said Mr. Thénardier. 'He must pay it, for I owe fifteen hundred francs! You will hand this bill to the man.'

Then he went out.

The traveler went downstairs.

-'It is early', said Mrs. Thénardier, 'are you leaving?'

-'Yes, Madam, I am leaving. What do I owe you, Madam?'

She silently handed him the bill.

The man unfolded the paper and said:

-'Madam, do you make good money here?'

-'So-so; there are not so many rich travelers and the fixed costs are high. For instance, Cosette's education costs a small fortune.'

-'Someone else could take care of her. Of course, one would pay you an indemnity.'

-'Would you be that person?'

-'Maybe.'

He glanced at the bill and cried:

-'Twenty-three francs!'

However, he set five silver coins on the table.

Mr. Thénardier came up to him and said:

-'Sir, I adore that child: money cannot buy feelings. It is clear that she is a financial burden and that she is lazy and moody, but we love her. Moreover, good people never entrust their child to a stranger; I don't know who you are. Actually, if I knew your identity, I would probably...

-'Mr. Thénardier you will know neither my name nor where I live, since I don’t want you to see her again.'

-'In that case, I will be more demanding.'

-'What do you mean?'

-'I need fifteen hundred francs.'

The stranger took a wallet from his pocket, opened it, unfolded three banknotes and set them on the table.

-'Fetch Cosette', said the man.

Mr. and Mrs Thénardier brought the little girl with them. Cosette regarded the stranger as the Messiah. He opened his knapsack; it contained a wool dress, an apron, a headscarf, a petticoat, stockings, shoes and a coat. All the clothes were black.

-'Put this on', said he.

At daybreak, the inhabitants of Montfermeil beheld a poorly-dressed old man and a little girl clad in black, who was holding a pink doll in her arms. They were heading for Livry. They did not know the man; they did not recognize Cosette, for she was well-dressed.

In the meantime, Mr. Thénardier showed the banknotes to his wife.

-'That's not a lot of money', said she.

-'You are right', he retorted. 'I am an idiot. Give me my hat.'

He folded the three banknotes, thrust them into his pocket and rushed out. He walked past the forest and the lake. Then he caught sight of the stranger's hat: the

man and Cosette were seated on the grass. He ran toward them, waving the banknotes and saying:

-'Sir, here are your fifteen hundred francs.'

-'What are you doing here?', asked the man.

-'I have come to bring Cosette home.'

Cosette shuddered and hid behind the old man.

-'You see, I am an honest man; this child does not belong to me; she belongs to her mother. Consequently, I can only entrust her to her mother.'

The man searched his pocket for his wallet, opened it, took a paper and handed it to the innkeeper, who said:

'Montreuil-sur-Mer, the 25th of March 1823.
Dear Mr. Thénardier,
Please entrust Cosette to this man.
He will pay for the extras.
Yours sincerely.
Fantine.'

-'Do you know that signature?', resumed the man. ‘Keep the paper.’

The greedy wolf used a last tactic.

-'Sir, I will bring Cosette home if you do not give me three thousand francs.'

The man did not reply. He just grasped his walking stick, took Cosette by the hand and went away.

-'I should have taken a gun!', Mr. Thénardier said to himself.

However, the innkeeper did not give up. He ran after them, for he wanted to know where they were going. Since they walked slowly, he could catch up with them, but when the stranger’s eyes met his, the greedy wolf became a cowardly doggie again: he turned his back and ran away.

BOOK THIRD:
MR. GORBEAU'S CABIN.

CHAPTER I: 50 OR 52?

Forty years ago, the east of Paris did not really belong to the city. It was not the country, for there were houses and streets, but it was not Paris, for there were weed-infested ditches and no sidewalks. This place was called the *Horse Market.*

On Vignes-Saint-Marcel Street, next to a factory, stood a two-storey shanty that was overshadowed by walls and trees. The front door and one window could be seen from the street. That door was made of worm-eaten planks. Someone had inscribed *Nº 52* on it. Beneath the gable, the same hand had inscribed *Nº 50*! The window was in good shape even though a paper bandage tried to reinforce a part of it.

This dwelling looked like a barn. The postmen called the house Number 50-52, but it was known, in the neighborhood, as Gorbeau's cabin since it had belonged to a man named Mr. Gorbeau.

Thirty seven years ago, the spot where stood Mr. Gorbeau's cabin was an ugly place. Between the Salpêtrière and Bicêtre, that is to say between the madness of women and the madness of men, there were abattoirs, factories and hovels. At nightfall, *Hospital boulevard* had a sinister appearance. The solitary passers-by could not help recalling the crimes that had been committed in the neighborhood, for each tree looked like a beheaded man! By day, it was ugly; in the evening, it was distressing; at night, it was terrifying.

Jean Valjean, who was carrying Cosette on his back, halted in front of Gorbeau's cabin. Like the birds of prey, he chose this deserted place to build his nest. He

took a sort of a passkey from his pocket, opened the door, entered, closed it carefully, and went upstairs. Then he took another key from his pocket and opened another door. He entered a spacious attic, where there were a mattress, a table and several chairs; a stove in which a fire was burning stood in one corner. At the end of the room, there was a folding bed: Jean gently laid Cosette on it.

He looked at her: he was moved by her serene countenance. She had fallen asleep even though she did not know him; she continued sleeping although she did not know where she was. He bent down and kissed her hand. It was daylight and the child was sleeping. All at once a cart that was rolling down the boulevard made the cabin quiver.

-'Yes, madam!', cried Cosette, waking with a start. 'Here I am! here I am!'

She sprang to her feet and looked around.

-'Where is my broom?', said she.

She beheld Jean Valjean's smiling face.

-'Ah! So it is true!', said the child. 'Good morning, sir.'

Cosette caught sight of the doll, seized it, started to play with it and asked Jean where she was, whether Mrs. Thénardier was far away, whether she would stay with him forever, and whether she had to tidy the room.

-'Play!', said Jean.

Cosette spent the day playing. She did not understand anything; she was just as happy as a clam at high tide.

CHAPTER II: AN INQUISITIVE HOUSEKEEPER.

Jean was careful: he never went out by day. Every evening, he walked for an hour or two. He chose the deserted parts of the boulevard. He often visited churches. He liked to go to *St. Medardus*, which was the

nearest church. When he did not bring Cosette along, she stayed with the housekeeper and the doll, but she preferred to accompany him.

They lived frugally. He had kept the shabby furniture he had found when he had moved in that room and wore the same old clothes every day. People believed that he was a poor man. Sometimes some kind-hearted women saw him pass along the street and gave him one cent. Jean accepted the coin and thanked them. Sometimes he met a beggar and discretely slipped a silver coin into his pocket. In the neighborhood, people soon called him the rich tramp.

The inquisitive housekeeper inquired after him; Cosette did not tell her anything. On one occasion, she saw him enter one of the empty bedrooms. She followed him and looked through a crack in the door: he unpicked a part of the lining of his riding coat, took a yellow paper and unfolded it. The old woman recognized a thousand-franc bill. She fled silently.

A moment later, Jean went to her bedroom. He asked her to go and change the thousand-franc bill. He added that it was a pension payment. She did not believe him, but she obeyed and did not forget to spread rumors. The following day, she cleaned their bedroom as usual and ventured to seize the yellow coat: she noticed that the lining had been sewn up. She felt it and discovered layers of paper! She thrust her hands into the pockets and found needles, thread, scissors, a big wallet, a very large knife and... several wigs of different colors!

CHAPTER III: THE FOOTSTEPS OF A WELL-KNOWN GHOST.

A mendicant was sitting on a bench near St. Medardus' Church. It was rumored that he was an ex-policeman even though he looked like a beadle. Jean put a silver coin in his hand. The mendicant looked up; Jean

froze: it seemed to him that he had just seen a ghost. 'Bah!', said he, 'I am mad! I am dreaming! It is impossible!' Then he went back home and ruminated on this apparition all night long, for sleep eluded him. In fact, he could not close his eyes because he did not want to see the loathsome face of Javert! He said to himself that he should have looked at the beggar's face more carefully.

On the following day, at nightfall, he went back to this church. The beggar was there. 'Good evening, my good man', said Jean Valjean, handing him a coin. The beggar looked him straight in the eye and replied: 'Thank you, my good sir.' Jean noted that he did not resemble Inspector Javert. He started to laugh and said to himself: 'Javert is a ghost.'

A few days later, as he was teaching Cosette how to spell her name, he heard the door of the cabin open and heavy footsteps in the corridor. He blew out his candle and hushed Cosette. After a while, he turned around, looked up and saw a light through the keyhole. Someone was holding a candle and listening at the door.

Several minutes elapses; the light grew dimmer; there was no noise at all: the mysterious individual who had been listening at the door had removed his or her shoes. Jean went to bed but could not fall asleep.

At daybreak, a door creaked. He sprang to his feet, looked through the keyhole and made out the figure of a tall man. He was wearing a long riding coat and holding an ebony cane. Jean shuddered, for this reminded him of Javert.

When the old woman asked to clean the room, at nine o'clock in the morning, Jean did not need to question her about the stranger, for gossips are talkative by nature. As she was sweeping the floor, she said to him:

-'You may have heard some noise last night?'

-'I normally sleep the sleep of the just, but I may have heard something indeed: what was it?'

-'It was a new tenant.'

-'A new tenant? What's his name?'

-'I don’t know exactly: Dumont or Daumont.'

-'And who is this Mr. Dumont?'

-'An individual investor like yourself.'

-'I see.'

Jean waited for her to leave the room. Then he put a few coins in his purse; a hundred-cent coin slipped out of his grasp and rolled noisily on the floor.

In the evening, he peeped at the boulevard and saw nobody. So he and Cosette went out hand in hand.

BOOK FORTH: THE HUNT.

CHAPTER I: THE PARISIAN LABYRINTH.

They retreated from the boulevard and dived down a small street. Jean glanced behind him to check whether someone was following him or not. Then they went down a great many streets and reached Pontoise Street. They walked past the police station and quickened their pace. Jean glanced behind him again: three men were following them. One of them entered the police station. So they hurried along the streets and arrived at Rollin’s College Crossroads. Four tall men were walking behind them. They halted in the middle of the street in order to talk. A moonbeam illumined their leader's face: Jean recognized Javert!

The two fugitives headed for the *Jardin des Plantes,* which they skirted. When they arrived at Austerlitz Bridge, Jean gave two cents to the guard. Then they walked across it and headed for Charenton Street. They soon reached Picpus Street. Suddenly, Jean beheld a shadow that was at the end of the street: Inspector Javert and his colleagues were probably already at the end of that street! At that very moment, Jean heard a loud noise: Javert, his colleagues and eight soldiers were going down Polonceau Street.

Jean looked at the wall that was in front of him: it was about six meters high. He could scale it easily since there were many holes, but Cosette could not. Actually, he needed a rope. Where could he find one? He caught sight of a streetlight that was situated in Genrot Line. In those days lamplighters used a rope to hoist the lamps. Hence, he crossed the dark street noiselessly, cut the rope and came back.

Cosette was worried, all the more so because the patrol was approaching. She tugged at his coat and said:

-'Daddy, I am afraid. Who is approaching?'

-'Hush!', he replied, 'it's Mrs. Thénardier.'

Cosette shuddered. He added:

-'Keep quiet, for if you speak, she will realize that you are here, and she will take you to Montfermeil.'

Then, he untied his cravat, put it around Cosette's body, under her armpits, fastened this cravat to one end of the rope, took the other end in his mouth, removed his shoes and stockings and began to climb the wall.

Cosette looked at him; she was panic-stricken. He said to her:

-'Lean against the wall.'

She obeyed.

-'Don't say a word, and don't move.'

The rope lifted her up. In the blink of an eye, she was at the top of the wall.

Jean grasped her harm, put her on his back and crawled along the wall. He found a building whose roof sloped down and almost reached the ground. The thundering voice of Javert ordered:

-'Search the blind alley! Straight-Wall Line is guarded; so is Picpus Street. He is in the blind alley.'

The soldiers rushed into Genrot Line. Jean and Cosette slid down the roof and leaped onto the ground.

CHAPTER II: AN ENIGMA.

They found themselves in a huge garden where tall poplars were waving at twisted apple trees, vegetable patches, cloches, stone benches and an old well. The corroded face of a marble statue was smiling at them. The building looked like a dilapidated barn, but all the windows were protected by bars. They entered it, for fugitives never feel safe if they cannot hide in a quiet shelter.

A quarter of an hour elapsed. All at once they heard women praying: the crystalline voices of angels were defeating the satanic growls of Javert's cohorts. Cosette and Jean knelt down. They did not know what it was. They did not know where they were. However, both of them, the penitent criminal and the innocent child, felt morally compelled to kneel down.

It was one or two o'clock in the morning. Cosette was silent. Jean believed that she was sleeping. He bent down and looked at her. Her eyes were wide open and she was still trembling.

-'How do you feel?', said Jean.

-'I am very cold', she replied. 'Is she still there?'

-'Who?'

-'Mrs. Thénardier.'

-'Ah!', said he, 'She is gone. You are safe now.'

He took off his coat and wrapped it around her.

-'Do you still feel cold?'

-'No, daddy.'

-'Fine. Stay here and try to sleep. I must search this place. I won't be long.'

He exited from the barn and walked along the large building. The tinkle of little bells broke the silence. This sound came from the garden. Jean turned around. He saw someone in the garden: a man was walking among the cloches. He was spreading something on the ground.

This man limped heavily as he moved. Jean came up to him and said:

-'One hundred francs!'

The man started at that sound and looked at him.

-'You will earn one hundred francs if you put me up tonight.'

A moonbeam lit Jean's terrified countenance.

-'Mr. Madeleine! What a surprise!', exclaimed the man.

This name uttered by a stranger in the middle of the night and in the middle of nowhere led him to take a step backward.

-'Good Lord! What are you doing here, Mr. Madeleine?

-'Who are you and where am I?', asked Jean.

-'Don't you recognize me? But it is you who sent me here!'

-'No, I don't recognize you.'

-'You saved my life...'

The man turned around; a moonbeam illuminated his face.

-'Mr. Fauchelevent!'

-'It is I!'

-'But what are you doing here at this late hour?'

-'I am covering my melons with cloches, of course, for it's a bit chilly tonight.'

-'And why do you wear a belt with little bells?'

-'Oh, this! It's because they want to avoid me.'

-'They want to avoid you! What kind of house is it?'

-'It is a convent.'

Jean suddenly remembered the whole story.

-'Picpus convent!'

-'Yes, it is. By the way, have the nuns allowed you to stay here?'

-'Not exactly... Mr. Fauchelevent, I need you help.'

-'How can I help you, Mr. Mayor?'

-'Is there a free bedroom here?'

-'There is a small cabin behind the old convent; there are three bedrooms.'

-'That's fine! Would you be kind enough to conceal my identity and tell everybody that you don't know where I am?

-'I will do so, Mr. Mayor.'

A few moments later, Cosette was sleeping in the old gardener's bed, next to the fireplace. Jean had put on his coat; Mr. Fauchelevent had taken his noisy belt off. They were warming themselves by the fireplace, eating cheese and drinking white wine.

CHAPTER III: FROM MONTREUIL-SUR-MER TO PARIS.

Meanwhile, Javert was prowling in the neighborhood, but why was he in Paris?

Actually, When Jean Valjean escaped from the prison of Montreuil-sur-Mer, the superintendent assumed that he would go to Paris. This city is a labyrinth in which everything disappears. Fugitives know that they can easily hide in the Parisian crowd, which is why chiefs of police always order their officers to search this city. Hence, Mr. Chabouillet transferred Javert to *Les Gobelins Police Station*.

In December 1823, he opened a newspaper, read an article dealing with the Duke of Angoulême's victories in Spain, glanced at the obituary columns and noticed that a convict named Jean Valjean had died. He checked the service number of the deceased, recognized it and concluded that he was indubitably dead.

Some time later, all the police stations of Paris were informed that Cosette, a seven-year-old girl, had been kidnapped by a stranger in Montfermeil and that her mother, a woman named Fantine, was reported missing. Javert wanted to clarify this mystery. Hence, he went to Montfermeil.

He expected to get accurate information, but Mr. Thénardier gave him imprecise answers. According to him, the old man was Cosette's grandfather, a wealthy farmer called Guillaume Lambert; he lived in Paris, but the innkeeper did not remember the name of the street. Javert returned to Paris and said to himself: 'Jean Valjean is dead; I am a stupid idiot!'

In March 1824, the police inspector heard of a strange man who lived in a hovel located near St. Medardus' Church and who had been nicknamed 'the rich tramp'. People said that he was a man of private means and the guardian of an eight-year-old girl who came from Montfermeil. An ex-beadle told him that this secretive person wore a yellow riding coat which was worth millions since he had put lots of banknotes underneath the lining. Javert was intrigued by this detail: he borrowed the ex-beadle's outfit, positioned himself next to the church and began to chant prayers.

In the evening, the suspect came up to the false beggar and gave him a silver coin. At that precise moment, Javert looked up. He assumed that he was Jean Valjean, but it was a dimly lit place and the authorities believed that he was dead. Hence, he followed him to Mr. Gorbeau's cabin, rented a room and eavesdropped from behind Jean's bedroom door.

The following day, Jean Valjean left; Javert and two police officers ran after him. When they reached Pontoise Street, a streetlamp illumined Jean's face; Javert was able, at last, to identify the man as Jean Valjean. The superintendent in charge of the nearest police station allowed a policeman to help Javert, who also asked a squad that was crossing St. Antony's Street to follow him, but they could not catch up with the fugitive. At daybreak, Javert left two guards in Polonceau Street and returned to the police station.

BOOK FIFTH:
THE VEIL OF OBLIVION.

CHAPTER I: HOW TO GET INTO A CONVENT.

Hence, Jean Valjean had fallen into a convent. The angels he had heard were the ethereal voices of the nuns chanting prayers; the hall he had seen was the chapel; the ringing that had bemused him came from Mr. Fauchelevent's belt.

At daybreak, Mr. Fauchelevent opened his eyes and noticed that Mr. Madeleine was not sleeping; he said to him:

-'You are here, but how can you stay here?... The nuns must not see you for the time being. So you should stay in the cabin. Besides, if you want to stay here, first, you must go out!'

-'Go out?'

-'Yes, Mr. Madeleine, you and she must follow the appropriate procedure, that is to say come through the door and be introduced to the prioress. By the way, what's her name?'

-'Her name is Cosette; she is my granddaughter.'

-'She will easily get herself out of here. Since it is I who always take out the garbage, she will hide in a trash bag and escape in this fashion. Then I will take her to the house of a friend of mine. As for...'

Suddenly, the bells started to toll.

-'What is this?'

-'The death knell: a sister has just died. The undertaker will soon send me a coffin. Then the nuns will put the deceased inside it and I'll nail the lid to it. Coffins are always placed in the room that connects with the

street so that the undertaker's assistants may carry it to the hearse easily.'

A little bell rang.

-'In think that the prioress wants to talk to me. Mr. Madeleine, stay here and wait for me.'

The gardener rushed out saying: 'Coming! Coming!'

CHAPTER II: REVEREND MOTHER INNOCENCE.

-'Mr. Fauchelevent, do you know the chapel?', inquired Reverend Mother Innocence.

-'Yes, I do; sometimes I put flowers in the vases.'

-'I want you to move a stone.'

-'Is it heavy?'

-'It is a slab that is next to the altar.'

-'Is it the grave slab?'

-'Yes, it is.'

-'It is very heavy; a man will have to help me.'

-'Sister Ascension, who is as strong as a man, will help you.'

-'A woman is not a man; my brother is more suitable for this job.'

-'The four sisters who are cantors will give you a hand.'

-'And when the slab is removed?'

-'You will have to lower a coffin into the grave.'

-'A coffin?'

-'Sister Crucifixion died at daybreak.'

-'Reverend Mother, she cannot be buried here.'

-'Mr. Fauchelevent, we must obey the dead. Since she wanted to be buried here, she will be buried here.'

-'Reverend Mother, it is forbidden.'

-'It is forbidden by men but ordained by God.'

-'What would happen if people found out the truth?'

-'I trust you.'

-'I will be as silent as the grave, but, Reverend Mother, the sanitary inspector and the police captain may...'

-'Those civil servants must not interfere, for if there are not always the Apostles of Satan, there are at least a stupid invention of the Revolution. Death does not belong to the state; it belongs to God. Don't you agree with me Mr. Fauchelevent?'

-'I do, Reverend Mother.'

-'So you will nail the lid to the coffin; the sisters will carry it to the chapel; we will celebrate the requiem Mass; we will return to the cloister. Then, Between eleven o'clock and midnight, you will come with your iron bar. Don't forget to take off your belt: the less noise the better!'

-'Reverend Mother...'

-'What?'

-'Next time, I hope you will ask my brother to do that: he is as strong as a bull...'

-'You will have to work fast.'

-'I'll do my best: I am a handicapped man! By the way, what will I do with the second coffin?'

-'The second coffin?'

-'The undertaker's coffin?'

-'I don't know.'

-'I could put earth inside and cover it with the pall.'

-'That's a very good idea.'

Her face lit up; she thanked him and added:

-'Mr. Fauchelevent, tell your brother and his granddaughter to come here tomorrow.'

CHAPTER III: YOU CAN ESCAPE YOUR DESTINY.

It took Mr. Fauchelevent a quarter of an hour to return to the cabin. Cosette and Jean were seated near the fireplace.

-'I have got some good news for you', said the gardener. 'You have an appointment with Reverend Mother Innocence. I have got some bad news too: I don't know how to get you out of here. That being said… I must fill an empty coffin with earth...'

-'An empty coffin?'

-'A nun dies; the municipal doctor comes and issues a death certificate; the government sends a coffin. The next day, the undertaker's assistants take it to Vaugirard Cemetery. They will come tomorrow and lift the coffin, but there will be nothing in it.'

-'Why?'

-'Because the dead nuns are always buried here. Mr. Madeleine, you are going to travel by... coffin!'

-'But how will I manage to breathe?'

-'I will drill a few holes here and there.'

-'What will happen at the cemetery?'

-'The gravedigger is a friend of mine. We will arrive at dusk, an hour before they close the gates of the cemetery. The undertaker's assistants will lower the coffin into the grave; the priest will say a prayer for the deceased, make the sign of the cross, sprinkle holy water and leave. I will be alone with Gaston. If he is not drunk, I will say to him: "Let's have a drink at *The Good Quince*." He won't refuse. So he will booze and nod off, which will allow me to come back. If he is drunk, I will say to him: "Go home! I'll take care of it." He will leave and I will free you.'

-'It is a good idea Mr. Fauchelevent; let's do it.'

So, the following day, at dusk, an old-fashioned hearse decorated with skulls, crossbones and tears went down Maine Boulevard. A priest, a choir boy, two pallbearers and an old man who walked with a limp were following it. They had just buried Sister Crucifixion in the vault beneath the altar; Cosette had left the convent by hiding in a garbage can; Jean Valjean had been put in the coffin.

The hearse arrived at the cemetery and stopped; the undertaker's assistants showed the burial permit to the guard. A stranger came and positioned himself next to Mr. Fauchelevent. He was a sort of farmworker; he was holding a mattock.

Fauchelevent stared at him.

-'Who are you?', he inquired.

-'The gravedigger.'

-'The gravedigger?'

-'Yes, I am.'

-'It is impossible: Mr. Mestienne is the gravedigger.'

-'He was.'

-'What do you mean?'

-'He is dead.'

-'Dead! But he was alive...'

-'You are always alive before you die!... I am Mr. Gribier; what's your name?'

-'Gaston is dead! I need a drink. After the burial, we'll go for a drink; I'll treat you to a few shots of hooch.'

-'I don't drink alcohol.'

Mr. Fauchelevent turned pale.

-'I am Mr. Fauchelevent. I work at the convent of the Bernardines of the Perpetual Adoration; I am a gardener and a gravedigger.'

-'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust... We are colleagues, actually.'

Fauchelevent, who was an intelligent man, realized that he had to deal with a smooth talker. He asked:

-'Where do you come from?'

-'I come from Paris, and you?

-'I guess this is not a suitable place to socialize; we should go to the pub.'

-'First, let's get the job done. You know, I must support seven children: since they must eat, I cannot drink.'

Fauchelevent began to feel dizzy.

CHAPTER IV: IN THE COFFIN.

Jean was quiet. Thanks to the noise and vibrations, he knew that he was in the cemetery.

All of a sudden, the coffin moved and a solemn voice uttered Latin words. Then he heard a sound that resembled the gentle patter of the rain on a roof. It was probably a few drops of holy water. A shovelful of earth fell on the coffin; a second shovelful fell and blocked up one of the holes through which he breathed. A third shovelful of earth fell and then a fourth; Jean fainted.

Fauchelevent positioned himself between the grave and the gravedigger and said:

-'You'll do that later; let's go to the *The Good Quince* before it closes.'

He grasped the man's arm.

-'Listen to me, my man. I'll help you, but let's go have a drink; aren't you thirsty?'

-'We will have a drink once the job has been done, not before.'

-'They have *Argenteuil wine*.'

The gravedigger bent down in order to fill his shovel with earth; a card fell out of his pocket; the gardener stepped on it.

-'By the way, my man, have you got a card?'

The gravedigger paused.

-'What card?'

-'The security pass.'

He fumbled in his pockets for that card.

-'I don't find it. I must have forgotten it.'

-'You will be fined fifteen francs.'

-'Fifteen francs!'

The gravedigger dropped his shovel.

-'Where do you live?'

-'I live on Vaugirard Street.'

-'It's very close.'

-'Yes, it is.'

-'Go get it, my man! I'll keep an eye on the deceased; I feel certain that she won't escape!'

The gravedigger left. Mr. Fauchelevent was alone. He seized his cold chisel and his hammer and pried up the lid. Then he bent down; Jean opened his eyes and said:

-'I was sleeping.'

-'Good Lord! I thought you were dead.'

The gardener helped him to his feet. Then they followed the main alley and reached the lodge. Fauchelevent showed the security pass; the guard opened the gates.

CHAPTER V: RELIEF.

An hour later, the two men and Cosette reached the convent. Mr. Fauchelevent knocked at the door. The doorman opened it and led them to the chapter house, where the prioress and a nun were waiting for them. The prioress stared at Jean from head to toe and said:

-'So you are Mr. Fauchelevent's brother...'

-'Yes, he is, Reverend Mother', replied Fauchelevent.

-'What is your name?'

-' His name is Ultime Fauchelevent.'

-'Where do you come from?'

-'He comes from Picquigny, near Amiens.'

-'How old are you?'

-'He is Fifty.'

-'What is your profession?'

-'He is a Gardener.'

-'Are you a good Catholic?'

-'Everyone is in the family.'

-'Is she your daughter?'

-'His granddaughter, Reverend Mother.'

The nun turned to the prioress in order to whisper:

-'Very good answers!'

The prioress looked at Cosette and murmured:

-'She will be ugly.'

Then she talked to the nun, turned around and said:

-'Mr. Fauchelevent, you will need another belt.'

It has to be noted that Cosette's ugliness led the prioress to believe that it was a good idea to hire Jean. Even though there are no mirrors in convents, women know whether they are pretty or not, and pretty little girls never want to become nuns! The prioress befriended Cosette and allowed her to attend the convent school.

Misfortune leads to silence. Cosette had suffered; in the convent, she remained silent for a while. Mr. Fauchelevent never revealed the details of Sister Crucifixion's burial. Jean continued to hide his past.

The cloister turned the sad, fearful little girl into a merry, talkative chaffinch. People think that a cloister resembles a prison, but they must not be fooled by the high walls. Society annihilates vice thanks to prisons; in cloisters, it protects virtue from society's vices. Evil enslaves man, whereas good frees him.

The peaceful garden, the sweet-scented roses, the happy children and the holy women slowly influenced Jean. The fumes from the outside world could not suffocate him anymore. Serenity turned him into a man who was able to love.

Volume 3:

MARIUS.

BOOK FIRST:
THE SCENT OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I: THE PARISIAN STREET URCHIN.

Paris is a singular place: it is a town, of course, but a town that looks like a huge garden filled with wild animals and pets. The doggies that protect the regime, that is to say policemen, watch over a vast territory inhabited by annoying sparrows: the Parisian street urchins.

Those young animals are high-spirited. They don't eat every day, but they go see a show every evening. They are homeless: they look like wandering flies that form groups in order to protect themselves from adversity. Those boys aged from 7 to 13 wear old pairs of trousers that belonged to their fathers, old hats that belonged to

their uncles, and yellow suspenders and clodhoppers. They wander the streets, smoke, swear like troopers, frequent pubs, befriend gangsters and naughty girls, speak slang, and sing bawdy songs, but they are not evil. Their hearts hide a pearl called innocence, and pearls do not dissolve easily in mud. In fact, children are not mean by nature; they just cannot distinguish good from evil.

The Parisian street urchins like to stroll along the streets, for they believe that they are free even though the threatening shadows of the wealthy remind them of their poverty, which is why they hate them. Those boys have their own games, vocabulary and jobs: they fetch the coaches, help people to get into them or cross the slippery streets, and inform the citizens of the new laws. They try to make money at any cost.

In summer, they turn into shameless naked frogs. At nightfall, in front of Austerlitz Bridge or Jena Bridge, they dive into the Seine. Nevertheless, the police keep an eye on them, and they keep an eye on the police! When a boy beholds the figure of a bobby, he warns his mates of the impending danger and croaks: 'Ahoy there! The cops are coming! Pick up your clothes and run away.'

Sometimes those gnats know how to read and write; they always know how to draw, for they have an interest in politics. From 1830 to 1848, they scribbled the King's pear-shaped head on the walls. On one occasion, *Louis Philippe d'Orléans* walked back home and saw a little fellow drawing a gigantic pear on the sidewalk of St. Honoratus' Street; the King, who had a great sense of humor, helped him to finish the drawing, gave him a gold coin, and said: 'My head is also on that coin.'

In short, the Parisian street urchins are but dwarfs who are mothered by a gigantic ogress: Paris!

CHAPTER II: GAVROCHE.

Eight or nine years after the events narrated in the second part of this story, an eleven-year-old street urchin sat on a bench situated on Temple Boulevard. This low-spirited child wore a pair of trousers that had not belonged to his father and a blouse that had not belonged to his mother. Some people had given him those rags out of charity. He had parents, but they did not love him, which was why they had abandoned him.

He was a boisterous, witty frail boy who used to sing, play marbles, stroll along the streets of Paris, and steal like a parsimonious sparrow that pecks at the ground and rarely finds crumbs.

However, every two or three months, he said to himself: 'Let's go and see mummy!' So he left the boulevard, the *Winter Circus*, and St. Martin's Gate, headed for the Seine, crossed the bridge, walked past the *Salpêtrière* and reached number 50/52 Vignes-Saint-Marcel Street, that is to say Mr. Gorbeau's cabin!

Back then, there were some lodgers in the cabin. All of them were poor. Mrs. Burgon was the new housekeeper. Mr. Jondrette, his wife and their two daughters were the poorest lodgers. Some time after their arrival, Mr. Jondrette had said to Mrs. Burgon: 'If someone asks for a Pole, an Italian, or even a Spaniard, tell him that I am available.'

The boy, I mean Gavroche, was a member of that family. When he came to see them, he was asked: 'Where are you coming from?' He retorted: 'From the street.' When he left, his father asked him: 'Where are you going?' He replied: 'to the street.' His mother added: 'Why did you come?'

This child did not receive affection, but he did not blame anybody, for he did not know what the normal behavior of normal parents was.

The Jondrettes rented a room at the end of the corridor; it was next to Marius' room. This young man was very poor. Now I must recount the history of his family so that you may become aware of his current situation.

BOOK SECOND: MR. GILLENORMAND.

CHAPTER I: AN HEALTHY UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS OLD MAN.

Mr. Gillenormand was a most peculiar man: an old-fashioned upper middle-class man who was as haughty as a grandee. Even though he was ninety years old, he walked without a cane, spoke loudly, had good eyesight, drank heavily, ate like a horse and slept like a log. He had strong white teeth and rarely wore spectacles.

This old healthy man was always in love, but he did not date women anymore because he believed that he was too poor. Actually, he had an income of fifteen thousand francs. He would have liked to inherit millions of francs in order to support a few courtesans!

Mr. Gillenormand was superficial and quick-tempered. He erupted over trifles and was always in the wrong. He could not stand being contradicted. When his fifty-year-old daughter raised her voice to him, he scolded her as if she were a disobedient eight-year-old girl. When he was in a bad mood, he slapped his servants across the face!

He lived in *Le Marais,* at 6 Filles-du-Calvaire Street. He had decorated his flat with *Gobelins* and *Beauvais* tapestries that depicted pastoral scenes. The paintings on the ceilings and the doors had been reproduced on the

back of the armchairs. In his bedroom, a stylish Coromandel folding-screen surrounded a four-poster bed whose blue silk bedspread was covered with silver roses and gold bees. The curtains matched the bedspread. Their elegant pleats adorned a window that overlooked a garden planted with blue hydrangeas. There was a library next to his bedroom; thousands of leather-bound books enticed visitors to enter a breathtaking boudoir with magnificent blue hangings decorated with fleurs-de-lis.

M. Gillenormand had been married twice. In his youth, he had been deceived by his wives, never by his mistresses, for he had been a bad husband but a charming lover.

He was a kind of aristocrat. I earnestly believe that he wanted to become a duke or at least a count, which was why he adored the Bourbons and hated 1789. He kept on telling people how he had survived *The Terror* and where he had hidden in order to elude capture for years. When a young man ventured to praise the republic in his presence, he turned red and beheaded him with his eyes, and when he alluded to his age, he used to say: 'I hope that I will not see ninety-three again.'

CHAPTER II: BIRDS OF A FEATHER DON'T FLOCK TOGETHER.

Mr. Gillenormand's daughters were born ten years apart. When they were young, they did not play together, for they did not have the same personality. The youngest girl was fond of music, flowers and literature. She lived in a fairy-tale world full of glory and passion in which knights ran after improbable dragons. The eldest dreamed too. She looked toward heaven and saw a wealthy, obedient contractor or a simple-minded prefect. Parties at the Prefecture, ushers wearing fancy uniforms, balls, speeches, to be called *'Madam Prefect'*... Oh, what a

Joy! They both had wings: the wings of illusion, the wings of mediocrity.

No ambition can really be fulfilled; no paradise become terrestrial nowadays. The youngest girl married the man of her dreams, but she died. The eldest did not get married.

The latter grew old. She became a prudish, pious spinster. She belonged to the *Society of the Blessed Virgin,* wore a white veil on certain occasions, mumbled special prayers, revered 'the Holy Blood', venerated 'the Sacred Heart of Jesus', spent hours contemplating a rococo altar, and went into raptures over marble angels and gilded halos.

I am willing to admit that Miss Gillenormand aged well. It is clear that she had never been malicious. Moreover, time had improved her imperfections. However, she was always sad and did not know why. I assume that her soul mourned her life, which had never started but was already over.

She was in charge of her father's house; she also took care of him and of a little boy who feared this demanding old man. Mr. Gillenormand kept on scolding him, but he liked him; this child was his grandson.

BOOK THIRD: THE GRANDFATHER AND HIS GRANDSON.

CHAPTER I: A RED SPECTER.

In Vernon, next to the Seine, was a humble house surrounded by a beautiful rose garden. It belonged to Georges Pontmercy: Mr. Gillenormand's son-in-law.

Georges was a young soldier when the Revolution broke out. His regiment joined the *Army of the Rhine*. So he fought the enemy in Spire, Worms, Neustadt, Turkheim, Alzey... In Italy, he was one of the thirty grenadiers who defended the Tenda Pass. He was appointed second lieutenant after the battle. In 1805, he and the *Malher Division* conquered Günzburg. During the battle of Austerlitz, when the Russian cavalry crushed the 4th battalion, Pontmercy and a handful of soldiers defeated their assailants. The Emperor awarded him the *Legion of Honor medal*. At the battle of Waterloo, he grasped the standard of the battalion of Lunenburg and handed it to the Emperor. He was covered with blood, for he had been slashed in the face. The Emperor shouted: 'I appoint you as colonel, baron and officer of the Legion of Honor!' Pontmercy replied: 'Your Imperial Majesty, I thank you on behalf of my widow.' An hour later, he fell in the ravine of Ohain. Then he was discovered by Mr. Thénardier but rescued by French soldiers who were retreating.

The Restoration compelled him to retire, placed him under house arrest in Vernon and refused to acknowledge that he was a colonel, an officer of the Legion of Honor and a baron. He could not wear his medals anymore, but he proudly displayed his slash.

During the Imperial period, he had found the time to marry Miss Gillenormand and to beget a child called Marius. The upper middle-class old man had given his consent in order to conceal his monarchist sympathies. In 1815, Mrs. Pontmercy had died; the grandfather had ordered his son-in-law to entrust the child to his grandfather. Mr. Pontmercy had obeyed him because he did not want his son to be disinherited: Mr. Gillenormand’s eldest daughter was very rich and her nephew was her sole legatee.

The boy knew that he had a father. The innuendos, whispers and conspiratorial winks led him to believe that his father was either a monster or a criminal. Actually,

Georges Pontmercy was but an outcast who was not allowed to raise his son. However, every two or three months, he went to Paris on the sly, hid behind a pillar in St. Sulpicius' Church, looked at the boy, who was attending mass with his haunt, shed a tear and returned to Vernon.

Twice a year, Marius wrote a letter to his father. The aunt recited a kind of administrative form; the nephew put empty words down on paper; the grandfather grumbled. His father also sent him letters, but he never received them, for his grandfather threw them away when he recognized his son-in-law's handwriting.

CHAPTER II: MAY THEY REST IN PEACE.

When Mr. Gillenormand lived on Servandoni Street, he frequented many aristocratic salons even though he was but an upper middle-class man. He was very amusing, and the old-fashioned aristocracy loved his puns and witty remarks. Hence, in 1817, he spent two afternoons a week in a nearby house that belonged to Lady Tourville. That person of quality invited a few friends over, which enabled them to drink tea, eat rum babas, and criticize the century, the constitution, the Bonapartists, and Louis XVIII's indulgence towards the usurpers. It is self-evident that they venerated the Count of Artois. Mr. Gillenormand was always accompanied by his daughter and a handsome seven-year-old boy, who heard remarks such as: 'What a good-looking child! It's a pity his father is a Bonapartist!'

Lady Tourville's salon represented all Marius Pontmercy knew about the world. This cheerful child soon became a moody boy. He was surrounded by the wrinkled faces of antediluvian duchesses who wore old-fashioned outfits. Their fluffy white wigs and lacquered fans frightened him. They were ghosts. He was facing the

past of Europe, which moved him to ignore France's current situation.

Fortunately, Marius did not only see his grandfather's eccentric friends; he went to school, which enabled him to keep things in perspective. However, he was not a brilliant student. He tried to learn Greek and Latin but only succeeded in speaking a Greco-Roman patois. Then he studied at the university of Paris: he became an ardent monarchist and a mediocre lawyer. He did not follow in his grandfather's footsteps because he did not like his old-fashioned values: Marius was a monarchist, not an archaeologist!

CHAPTER III: A REQUIEM MASS AND A GRAIN OF TRUTH.

When he turned 17, his grandfather left the *Faubourg Saint-Germain* and Lady Tourville's salon in order to move to his house located at 6 Filles-du-Calvaire Street.

One evening, he said to his grandson:

-'Your father is ill. He would like to see you... Set out tomorrow morning, for it is a matter of utmost urgency.'

The next day at twilight, Marius arrived at his father's house. A woman opened the door.

-'I would like to speak to Mr. Pontmercy', said he.

The woman did not reply.

-'Is this his house?', he asked.

The woman nodded in agreement.

-'Can I speak with him?'

The woman shook her head.

-'I am his son! He is expecting me.'

-'It's too late', said the woman.

Then she led him to a room on the ground-floor. There were three men: a physician, a priest and an army

officer, who was lying on the floor. The latter had just expired. The servant handed him a paper that read:

'For my son.

The Emperor appointed me as baron on the battlefield of Waterloo. Since the new regime does not recognize this title, which was bestowed upon me for my bravery, my son will bear it and be worthy of it.

During this battle, a sergeant saved my life. The name of this man is Thénardier. I think that he is the owner of a small inn near Chelles. If my son meets him, he will do his best to help him.'

Marius folded the paper with care, attended the burial and returned to Paris, where he went to the library of the university of law in order to look through the *Moniteur,* history books on the Republic and the Empire, the *Memorial of Saint Helena*, memoirs, newspapers, and bulletins. He saw the name of his father in the *Bulletin of the Great Army*; the note was laudatory. He went to see General Mabeuf, who told him that he admired the Colonel; he also described his life in Vernon among his flowers. Hence, Marius began to understand that the French Revolution and the Napoleonic regime had called into question the political supremacy of a family and its wealthy jesters. Actually, he had been unable to understand the history of his country and the role played by his father. Now he admired France, adored the Colonel and hated his grandfather!

On one occasion, he went to Montfermeil in order to obey his father and meet Mr. Thénardier, namely the sergeant of Waterloo. He did not meet him, for the inn had filed for bankruptcy. Marius stayed four days in Montfermeil and talked with the inhabitants, but nobody knew where the innkeeper was.

CHAPTER IV: CHERCHEZ LA FEMME!

Mr. Gillenormand had a great-grandnephew who was a lancer. Théodule Gillenormand was tall, slim and handsome: women were crazy about him. He rarely came to Paris and did not even know Marius.

Miss Gillenormand was embroidering a linen handkerchief when she heard the parquet creak. She looked up: Lieutenant *Pretty Boy* saluted. She squealed with delight. He kissed her.

-'I am so happy to see you, Théodule', she exclaimed. 'Where are you going?'

-'I am going to Gaillon, Aunt Mary; my battalion will be quartered there.'

-'I hope you will stay with us for a week at least?'

-'Unfortunately, I must leave this evening, Aunt Mary. By the bye, I learned that Marius will leave Paris tonight!'

-'How do you know that?', asked his aunt, her eyes wide open and full of curiosity.

-'Upon my arrival, I went to the stagecoach ticket office in order to book a seat, and I saw his name on the passenger list.'

-'Where does the coach terminate?'

-'At Les Andelys.'

-'So Marius is going to Les Andelys...'

-'He might get off the coach at Vernon in order to take the coach to Gaillon.'

-'My dear Théodule.'

-'Yes, Aunt Mary.'

-'Marius is a naughty boy!

-'Really?'

-'He stays out all night.'

-'Oh boy!'

-'And I would like to find the truth.'

-'Cherchez la femme!'

-'You might be right, which is why I want you to follow him. Since he does not know you, you will be able to spy on him.'

That very evening, Marius got into the coach; he did not know that someone was spying on him. As for the spy, he fell asleep instantly!

At daybreak, the coachman shouted: 'Vernon! Vernon Station!' Lieutenant Gillenormand woke up. His eyes fell on his cousin.

A young country girl was selling flowers to the travelers. Marius came up to her and bought the prettiest bouquet. Théodule wondered to whom he would offer it. So he followed Marius, who did not pay attention to Théodule.

They soon reached a church. Marius did not enter it; he skirted the apse. The lieutenant slowed his pace, reached the back of the church and froze: Marius was kneeling in front of a grave. The white roses had been gently placed below a black wood cross on which had been written: COLONEL PONTMERCY, BARON OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE. Marius was crying.

CHAPTER V: MARBLE AGAINST GRANITE.

The lieutenant felt dizzy. He moved back and left Marius in the cemetery. He was so embarrassed that he did not dare to write to his aunt.

Marius returned from Vernon on the third day at noon. The journey had tired him. Since he needed to get some rest, he decided to go to the swimming pool in order to relax. Mr. Gillenormand heard his footsteps. He went upstairs, but his grandson had just left. He entered his bedroom. He saw a riding coat and a black ribbon. He seized them. A few moments later, he entered the sitting room like a Roman emperor passing through the *Porta*

Triumphalis; Miss Gillenormand was embroidering a pinafore.

-'Victory! We are about to solve the mystery. We are going to know the identity of the girl.'

The old man took the locket and said triumphantly:

-'I feel certain that there is a picture inside: the portrait of an ugly country girl.'

-'Let's see', said his daughter.

Mr. Gillenormand opened the box and found a folded paper.

-'I know what it is; it is a love letter.'

Mary put on her spectacles, unfolded the paper, and read it.

-'For my son. The Emperor appointed me as baron on the battlefield of Waterloo. Since the new regime does not recognize this title, which was bestowed upon me for my bravery, my son will bear it and be worthy of it.'

They remained speechless for a while. Then Mr. Gillenormand whispered:

-'It is his father's handwriting.'

Mary folded the paper again, put it back in the locket and thrust it into the riding coat's pocket. She felt a visiting card, looked at it and read: Lord Marius Pontmercy...

They remained silent for an hour. Then Marius appeared. His grandfather was holding his visiting card. He exclaimed:

-'I did not know you were a baron. What does it mean?'

Marius blushed and retorted:

-'It means that I am the son of my father.'

Mr. Gillenormand stopped grinning like a Cheshire cat and said harshly:

-'I am your father.'

-'You are just my grandfather!', answered Marius. 'My father was a humble, heroic man who dedicated his life to serving the Republic and his country.'

The old man turned red.

-'Marius, your father was a republican! Those monsters covered the country with blood: they beheaded France! Robespierre was a murderer who concealed his vices by means of pestilential democracy! Buonaparte was a mediocre corporal who deserted at Waterloo! They took power in order to become God, but the grimacing face of Satan cannot hide for very long, and the people of *Eternal France* ended up defeating absolute evil.'

The monarchist had put the republican in his place.

-'Down with the Bourbons and the crowned piglet', yelled Marius.

Louis XVIII had been dead for four years, but it was all the same to him.

The old purplish man turned pale. He said:

-'A baron and an upper middle-class man cannot live in the same house: go away!'

Marius left the house. On the following day, Mr. Gillenormand said to his daughter:

-'You'll send six hundred francs every six months to that bloodthirsty brute, but never ever utter his name in my presence.'

BOOK FOURTH: THE FRIENDS OF THE ABC.

CHAPTER I: MARIUS BEFRIENDS THE FRIENDS OF THE ABC.

Back then, people were still influenced by the Revolution. As a matter of fact, everybody was becoming

more liberal. Consequently, all authoritarians regimes were being questioned by authoritarian conspirators, who formed secret societies such as The Friends of the ABC.

Enjolras, Combeferre, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Bahorel, Bossuet, Joly and Grantaire belonged to that group. They were political extremists. They used to gather in a back room of *Musain Café,* a pub located near St. Michael's Fountain. In that place, they smoked, drank, gambled, laughed, spoke about many things and whispered about a few others. Most of them were students who came from the south of France.

Enjolras was their leader. He was the only son of a wealthy man. He was also a very good-looking young man whose feelings often turned him into a brute: when he was eighteen, he had married the bloodied Republic. Actually, he was not a human being but the dark side of any revolution.

Bossuet was leaning against the front door of Musain Café, staring at St. Michael's Square, when a cabriolet passed by. He beheld a young man who was holding an overnight bag with a label on which was written: MARIUS PONTMERCY.

Bossuet jumped to his feet and cried:

-'Mr. Pontmercy!'

The cabriolet stopped.

-'What?', said the young man.

-'Are you Marius Pontmercy?'

-'Yes, I am.'

-'I was looking for you.'

-'How so? I don't even know you.'

-'Neither do I!... You did not go to school the day before yesterday!'

-'How do you know that? Are you a student?'

-'Yes, I am. The day before yesterday, I was in class. Professor Blondeau called the roll. When he uttered Marius Pontmercy, nobody answered. Since I did not

want this student to be expelled, I replied: “here.” Then Professor Blondeau uttered my name and I also replied: “here.” He looked at me, smiled and said: “Mr. Pontmercy, who do you think you are fooling?” Then he savagely crossed my name off the student list!'

-'I can't believe it', exclaimed Marius.

-'Neither can I!'

-'I am very sorry for you.'

Bossuet burst into laughter and added:

-'This deletion saved me from defending orphans and suing widow. I will never become a black parrot. Thank you very much, Mr. Pontmercy. I would like to send you a present. Where do you live?'

-'Actually, I am homeless, and I don’t know where to go.'

-'Come to my place', said Courfeyrac as he exited the pub and got into the cabriolet. He added:

-'Coachman, take us to St. James’ Gate, please.'

That very evening, Marius became the roommate of Courfeyrac and one of his friends.

CHAPTER II: THE BACK ROOM OF MUSAIN CAFÉ.

On the following day, Courfeyrac took Marius to Musain Café. Then, smiling, he whispered: 'It is high time you became a real revolutionary.' He led him to the room of the Friends of the ABC and introduced him to the other members of this secret society.

That evening, Combeferre and Courfeyrac criticized *The Charter*.

-'First of all', said Courfeyrac, 'I don't want a king to rule France, for kings are parasites. When *François I* died, the national debt amounted to thirty thousand pounds; When *Louis XIV* died, it amounted to twelve billion pounds! Secondly, a charter that has been imposed on citizens is a bad compromise: it aims to slowly democratize monarchy, but it is just a farce. A charter is a

mask, a lie, for a people that accepts a charter is a people that refuses to be free. Down with the charter!'

Courfeyrac crumpled the piece of paper on which was written the Charter and flung it into the fire. Combeferre watched the masterpiece of Louis XVIII burn and said quietly:

-'The Charter is burning'

A moment later, Bossuet exclaimed:

-'The 18th of June 1815: Waterloo!'

Marius looked at them, rose, walked slowly to the map of France that had been pinned to the wall, laid a finger on it and said:

-'Corsica: a small island that turned France into a great country.'

Enjolras retorted:

-'France did not need Corsica to become a great country. France is great by its very nature!'

Marius looked Enjolras straight in the eye and declaimed:

-'God forbids me to belittle France, but when I associate Napoleon with it, it does not mean that I want to belittle it. Napoleon was a genius. As a matter of fact, he wrote codes, made history, defeated European monarchs, overcame obscurantism and reshaped our continent. The archangel of war brought civilization to the enslaved Europe. A fiery nation followed the sword of God and the man who was more powerful than Hannibal, Caesar and Charlemagne; a blazing people defeated the enemy at the battles of Marengo, Arcola, Austerlitz, Jena and Wagram in order to reach the Elysium! The French Empire outshone the Roman Empire; France dominated and dazzled the world. Sublimity is more important than anything else.'

-'Freedom is much more important', retorted Combeferre.

Marius lowered his head. That simple word had stabbed him in the heart. When he looked up, Combeferre was no longer there.

BOOK FIFTH: THE BENEFIT OF MISFORTUNE.

CHAPTER I: DESTITUTION.

Marius' savings did not last long. His life became hard. He neither ate every day nor slept in a bed every night. His neighbors made fun of the young man dressed in rags, whereas the rich little girls pointed the finger at the vagabond: destitution is a crime. He felt ashamed, but shame and adversity can give birth to strength of character and nobility of spirit sometimes.

On several occasions, his aunt sent him money, but he returned it, claiming that he did not need anything. However, he passed the bar examination and became a lawyer. So he wrote a letter to his grandfather, who crumpled it in his hands and threw it into the dustbin saying to himself: 'If you were not an idiot, you would know that barons never become lawyers.'

As time elapsed, Marius' financial situation improved. By dint of hard work, courage, perseverance and goodwill, he managed to earn seven hundred francs a year. He learned German and English. Thanks to Courfeyrac, he became a bookseller assistant. He wrote advertisements, translated newspapers, annotated books, published biographies, and lived frugally.

Marius rented a shabby room in Mr. Gorbeau's cabin; he paid thirty francs a year. The room cleaning and breakfast cost him three francs a month. At six o’clock in the evening, he dined at Rousseau’s. He ate bread, meat, vegetables and a pudding; he only drank water and tipped the waiter one cent. In fact, he spent twenty cents a day on food, which amounted to three hundred and sixty-five francs a year. Thirty francs for the rent, plus thirty-six francs for the room cleaning and breakfast, plus

one hundred francs to purchase clothes, plus one hundred francs for the laundry expenses, plus a few trifles made a grand total of six hundred and fifty francs. Since the remainder amounted to fifty francs, Marius considered that he was rich!

Throughout all the years he had been fighting against adversity, he had been encouraged, and even inspired, by a secret force: the hallowed image of his father. In a hidden corner of his contemplative mind, the beloved ghost kept on saying to him: 'Marius, search for the sergeant of Waterloo...'

CHAPTER II: THE SUBSTITUTE.

A great-grandnephew is not that different from a grandson. Théodule's regiment chanced to stay in Paris. Aunt Mary thought that it was a good idea to substitute Théodule for Marius: a beloved lancer is always more soothing than a disliked lawyer.

Mr. Gillenormand was about to read a newspaper when his daughter entered the sitting room and murmured:

-'Father, Théodule will come this morning in order to pay his respects to you.'

-'Who is Théodule?'

-'Your great-grandnephew.'

-'Ah!', said he.

Then he resumed reading, forgot his great-grandnephew's visit and soon flew into a rage. The royalist rag he was holding announced that the law and medical students had to assemble in front of the *Panthéon* in order to deliberate over the cannons that stood in the courtyard of the *Louvre*.

Lieutenant Gillenormand entered the room a few moments later; he saluted and stammered:

-'Good morning, Uncle Luke.'

-'Good morning *Theomule*...'

-'... Théodule.'

-'As you wish! Please be seated.'

The young man sat down; the old man rose, forgot Théodule and resumed his diatribe.

-'A bunch of brats! What a disgrace! Nowadays children give their opinion! This is the result of the Revolution: the rabble decides and the persons of quality obey!'

-'This is true, Uncle Luke', said Théodule.

-'There are cannons in the courtyard of the *Louvre*; so what? Isn't it necessary to protect the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Aphrodite of Milo a*gainst Republicans? If you allow them to vote, they will soon place a Phrygian cap on Apollo's head and pin a cockade on Aphrodite's chiton. Those persons must not decide, for they are simple-minded murderers.'

-'It is clear that they are murderers', Théodule agreed.

-'The murderer Sieyès was just a redneck who wanted to become a ruler! There was neither social progress nor humanity in their republic but plain barbarity. Democracy does not make any sense!'

-'You are stating the obvious', cried the lieutenant

Mr. Gillenormand turned to the young man, stared at him and said:

-'By the by, who are you?'

BOOK SIXTH:
A COLLISION BETWEEN TWO STARS.

CHAPTER I: THE UGLY GIRL WHO BECAME PRETTY.

Back then, Marius was a good-looking young man with thick dark hair, sparkling black eyes and the muscular body of a Roman statue. Actually, he was the spitting image of *Cleomenes the Athenian's Marcellus*. Girls were crazy about him, all the more so because he was well-educated, polite and shy. However, he did not dare to address them because he had a complex about his poverty. So when he went to the Luxembourg Garden, he never flirted. He just peeked at a girl who was thirteen or fourteen, slim, awkward and ugly. She would wear a black school uniform and behaved as if she were the daughter of the white-haired old man who always accompanied her. Courfeyrac, who was horrified by the girl's appearance, had nicknamed her *Miss Blackpudding*. As for the man, he had nicknamed him *Colonel Whitefur* because he looked like an ex-serviceman.

Marius stopped going to the Luxembourg Garden for six months. Then, on a beautiful summer morning, he decided to go for a walk. So he headed for that park and the bench where Miss Blackpudding and Colonel Whitefur were seated. As he approached them, he recognized the man, not the girl, for she did not look like a school toad anymore. In fact, he beheld a beautiful tall young woman with neatly plaited chestnut hair, a marble brow, a Parisian nose, rosy cheeks, ruby-red lips and an exquisite smile. Marius believed that she was the sister of the ugly girl, but he passed near them, looked at her and

recognized the school girl. The pustulated toad had turned into a charming young lady! She looked up; her blue eyes hardly noticed him.

He returned to the park the following day. He sat on a bench, opened a book and hid behind the dusty pages. Colonel Whitefur and his daughter, who were seated on a bench situated at the far end of the alley, rose and headed towards him. Marius started to shiver. 'Why are they coming here?', he said to himself. He would have liked to be the handsomest man in the world; he would have liked to wear a luxurious outfit, a diamond tiepin and a showy gold watch chain. The young lady passed and looked at him. Marius drowned in her mesmerizing blue eyes. Then he watched her disappear in the distance, rose, walked rapidly, reached the gates, lost sight of her and started to run. His heart burst into flames: Marius had just fallen in love with a stranger.

CHAPTER II: TWO LETTERS AND A FEW CONJECTURES.

For the following month, Marius went to the Luxembourg Garden every day. He used to hide behind the pedestal of a statue so that the old gentleman might not see him, but Colonel Whitefur noticed this ploy. Consequently, he did not bring his daughter with him every day.

One evening, at dusk, he found a white handkerchief underneath their bench. He seized it hastily and beheld a *U* and an *F* embroidered on it. Marius did not know this pretty girl's name. He conjectured that her first name was Ursula and her middle name Faith. Ursula Faith: what an alluring evocation of love! However, this handkerchief belonged to the old gentleman!

Marius believed that he knew her name; then he wanted to know where she lived. Hence, on one occasion, he followed her: she lived on West Street, in a three-

storey house that was new and simple. He got used to following her home, but he wanted to get more information. So, one evening, he said boldly to the caretaker:

-'Is the gentleman who has just come in the person who lives on the first floor?'

-'No, he is not', replied the caretaker, 'this gentleman lives on the third floor.'

-'In the flat that overlooks the street?', asked Marius.

-'Of course!', said the man, 'all the flats overlook the street in this building.'

-'And what is that gentleman's profession?', inquired Marius.

-'He is a private investor, sir, and also a benefactor, even though he is not a wealthy man.'

-'What's his name?'

-'Are you a police spy?', retorted the caretaker.

Marius went away with his tail between his legs. However, he was making progress.

On the following day, Colonel Whitefur and his daughter made a brief appearance at the Luxembourg Garden. They left at the beginning of the afternoon. Marius followed them as usual. They walked past the gates; the old man turned around; he met Marius's eyes and quickened his pace. They did not come the following day, nor did they come the following week.

On the ninth day, at dusk, Marius went to the place where they lived. He looked up. There was no light in their apartment, and the shutters had been closed.

Marius knocked at the door, entered and said to the caretaker:

-'May I speak to the gentleman who lives on the third floor?'

-'You can't, for he moved away', replied the man.

Marius staggered and asked:

-'When?'

-'Yesterday.'

-'Where did he go?'
-'I don’t know.'

BOOK SEVENTH:
THE WICKED POOR MAN.

CHAPTER I: TWO ENIGMAS.

Winter came. Neither Colonel Whitefur nor the young lady returned to the Luxembourg Garden. Marius kept on searching the park, for he was obsessed with her.

One evening, as he was going down Invalids Boulevard, he beheld a pensive white-haired man dressed like a factory worker. His hair and countenance reminded him of Colonel Whitefur! But why was he wearing this overall? Was it a fancy dress? Marius was puzzled by this apparition. He followed him, but the man vanished behind the buildings. He returned to Mr. Gorbeau's cabin and pondered on this encounter for three days. He ended up admitting that it was just a striking physical resemblance between two different people.

On a gloomy winter evening, Marius left the cabin. He slowly walked down St. James’ Street. All at once someone jostled him. He turned around and saw two young girls dressed in rags run away. They disappeared around the corner. Marius halted for a moment. He looked down and saw a gray envelope which was lying on the pavement. He picked it up, put it in his pocket and went back home.

Once he was in his bedroom, he opened it and discovered four unsealed letters that smelled like tobacco. He perused them, and they perplexed him, for the authors had not given their addresses and the four letters had been written by the same hand on the same yellow paper that smelled of tobacco. What a bizarre

story! Marius put them back in the envelope and went to bed.

At seven o'clock in the morning, someone knocked at the door.

-'Come in', said Marius.

The door opened.

-'What do you want, Mrs. Bougon?', asked Marius as he kept on reading his book.

A voice which did not belong to the housekeeper replied:

-'Excuse me, sir...'

It was a gravelly voice: the detestable voice of a drunkard.

Marius turned around hastily and saw... a young girl!

CHAPTER II: GENUINE POVERTY.

She was standing in the doorway. The timid sun of a frigid winter day illuminated a skinny adolescent girl who wore a dirty blouse and a skirt full of holes. Marius blenched.

-'What do you want, miss?', he asked.

-'Here is a letter for you, sir', replied the young lady in a hoarse voice.

Marius grasped the letter and read it; it said:

'My dear neighbor,

I have learned that you paid my rent six months ago, and I want to thank you for your generosity. My eldest daughter will tell you that we haven't eaten anything in two days. I feel certain that your generous heart will compel you to do me a favor and give me a piece of bread or forty cents.

Respectfully yours.

Mr. Jondrette.'

A piece of bread, forty cents, the same handwriting, the same yellow paper... and this smell! Five letters, five stories, five signatures, but a single author. Marius' neighbor was a crook. He impersonated pitiful men in order to squeeze money out of good-hearted benefactors. His daughters were his accomplices. Judging from last night's incident, they were also involved in shady affairs. Poverty and lack of education had begotten two monsters, two thoughtless, immature girls who were unable to distinguish good from evil.

-'I have a packet that belongs to you', said Marius as he handed her the envelope containing the four letters and a five-franc coin. She curtsied to him, opened the door and left.

Marius was poor, but his neighbors were poorer than he, and the wall that separated their utter destitution from his mild poverty was just a thin layer of plaster. He examined it and soon discovered a triangular hole near the ceiling. He climbed onto the commode and looked through the crevice. He beheld a sixty-year-old man who was writing a letter. He was short, skinny, pale and haggard. He looked cruel, anxious and profoundly dishonest. A tall, fat woman around forty years of age was sitting on the floor near the fireplace. A fourteen-year-old girl was lying on one of the mattresses. She was the younger sister of the one who had visited Marius. Suddenly, the man grumbled:

-'Scoundrels! Scoundrels! All of them!'

-'Calm down, sweetheart' said the woman. 'Don’t bother your head with those people.'

The door of the garret opened abruptly. The eldest girl appeared. She was breathless.

-'He is coming!', she said.

The father looked at her; the woman turned to her; her little sister did not move.

-'Who?', asked her father.

-'The gentleman!'

-'The philanthropist from St. James’ Church?'

-'Yes.'

-'Are you sure?'

-'Yes, I am: I have just seen his cabriolet.'

The man seized a jug and flung the water onto the embers. He grasped the chair, kicked the seat and made a big hole in it. Then he said to his youngest daughter:

-'Hurry up! Break the windowpane!'

The girl jumped to her feet, punched the pane and began to cry.

-'What's the matter?', he inquired.

His daughter showed him her bloodied fist.

-'Look what you've done!', exclaimed the woman. 'She is bleeding because of you.'

-'So much the better! Now we can receive the philanthropist.'

CHAPTER III: IT IS SHE!

Someone knocked at the door. The man opened it, smiled like an obsequious lackey, bowed deeply and said:

-'Please come in! I am so happy to see you.'

An old man and a young lady appeared in the doorway.

Marius was still watching. He recognized her. It was She! He almost swooned. She took a step forward and put a large parcel on the table. Colonel Whitefur said to Mr. Jondrette:

-'My good man, in this package, you will find new clothes, stockings and wool blankets.'

-'Thank you very much; that's very kind of you', said Mr. Jondrette, kissing his hand.

-'By the way, I don't remember your name.'

-'I am Mr. Fabantou, actor and ex-pupil of *François-Joseph Talma.* I once was famous, but good fortune and fame don't last forever. As you can see, we have nothing to eat, there is no fire in the fireplace, our only chair has no seat, the windowpane is broken, my wife is sick, my

daughter is injured and our landlord is going to evict us, for we owe him four... sixty francs.'

Colonel Whitefur took a silver coin from his pocket and set it on the table saying:

-'Mr. Fabantou, I have no money on me, but I can come tonight in order to give you the sixty francs. When must you pay off your debt?'

-'Tonight at eight o'clock', he replied.

-'In that case, I will be here at six.'

The obsequious crook bowed to him. Then Colonel Whitefur and the young lady left the room. Marius wanted to follow them so that he might discover where they lived. So he laid his hand on the handle and opened the door: there was nobody in the corridor. He hurtled down the stairs and reached the boulevard; he saw a fiacre rolling along Small-Banker Street. Since he did not have enough money to take one, he began to run after that fiacre, but he soon lost sight of it. So he decided to return to Gorbeau's cabin.

When he reached Fagon Street, he beheld Mr. Jondrette. He was chatting with a sinister-looking man, a night prowler called Panchaud, alias Printanier, alias Bigrenaille! Back then, he was just an ordinary thug, not the famous murderer he became.

Marius ascended the steps slowly. He caught sight of *Gal Jondrette the Elder*: she was following him. Marius entered his room and pushed the door; it did not close. He turned his head and saw the girl again.

-'What do you want?', he asked angrily.

-'You are a good man; I don't want you to be sad. I feel certain that I can help you.'

-'Maybe... Do you know the address of the people who were here an hour ago? I mean the old gentleman and this girl.'

-'No, I don't.'

-'Could you find it?'

-'I could; what will you give me in return for my help?'

-'Anything you want.'

-'Anything I want?'

-'Absolutely.'

-'You will get their address.'

She winked at him and closed the door behind her.

Marius plumped down in a chair. He felt dizzy. He rested his head against the wall and heard Mr. Jondrette say:

-'I can assure you that I know this man. It is he; IT IS HE!'

-'Are you sure?', asked Mrs. Jondrette.

-'Yes, I am. Eight years have passed, but I recognize him! Some people don't grow old: he has the same face, the same hair, and the same voice. '

-'Have you seen the young lady?'

-'Of course, I have!'

-'It is she!'

-'It's impossible', said his wife.

-'I can assure you that it is she!'

-'But she was so ugly. This girl is pretty: it cannot be she!'

-'IT... IS... SHE! We can turn this disaster into an opportunity.'

-'What do you mean?'

-'Croesus will come at six o'clock! That's the hour when our neighbor goes out for dinner. The housekeeper will work in town. So the house will be empty. We will have plenty of time to bamboozle him.'

-'What if he doesn't want to pay?'

-'We'll bump him off.'

Jondrette opened a cupboard, took an old cap, put it on and exited from the room.

CHAPTER IV: THE TRAP.

Those monsters were about to trick Colonel Whitefur and his daughter. He wanted to help them, but

he did not know what to do. So he decided to inform the police.

When he arrived at 14 Pontoise Street, Marius told a police inspector what had happened and that the crime would be committed in Mr. Gorbeau's cabin. The inspector looked up and said coldly:

-'So it is in the room at the end of the corridor?'

-'Precisely', answered Marius. 'Do you know that place?'

-'Maybe.'

Then the inspector muttered:

-'Patron-Minette must have a hand in this. Do those people frighten you?'

-'Not really', answered Marius.

-'Do you have the key that opens the front door?'

-'Yes, I have.'

-'Could you give it to me?'

-'Sure.'

The inspector took two small pistols from his pockets and handed them to Marius.

-'Take these guns; go home; hide in your bedroom. They are loaded with two bullets. That man and his accomplices will come. They will mistreat the old gentleman. Let them beat him. Then fire a shot at the ceiling. My colleagues and I will hear the noise. So we will come right away.'

Marius hid the small pistols in his waistcoat.

The inspector shook Marius's hand and said:

-'By the way, I am Inspector Javert. How do you do?'

Marius sat on his bed. He laid his hands on the pistols. He looked up and saw a red light coming through the crevice. He took his boots off, placed them noiselessly under his bed, cocked one gun, and came up to the crevice. He looked through it. Colonel Whitefur entered the room, sat down and asked:

-'How is your daughter?'

-'She is sick', replied Mr. Jondrette. 'Her sister has taken her to the hospital.'

-'Mrs. Fabantou seems to feel better.'

-'Not at all: she is dying! But she is so brave... She is not a woman but an ox!'

The door creaked. Three weird-looking men entered, shook hands with Colonel Whitefur and sat on the floor near the fireplace.

-'Some friends of yours, I suppose', said Colonel Whitefur.

-'Absolutely', retorted Mr. Jondrette.

The door of the room opened again. Three men came in; they were wearing blue overalls and masks.

-'Is everything ready?', asked Jondrette.

-'Yes', replied one of the men.

-'Where is Montparnasse?'

-'He is talking to Éponine.'

-'Is the buggy at the door?'

-'Yes.'

-'Fine.'

Colonel Whitefur was very pale. He was staring at them and realized that he had fallen into a trap. The men who were seated in front of the fireplace seized tools and came up to the door. Jondrette turned to the old gentleman and said:

-'Don't you recognize me?'

-'No, I don't.'

-'My name is not Fabantou; my name is not Jondrette; my name is Thénardier!'

Marius stifled a scream. He knew that name: it was written in his father's will. The man who had saved his father's life was this crook!

Colonel Whitefur blushed.

-'Sorry, I don't know you.'

-'You don't know me! Don't you remember Fantine, or the doll, or the lark?'

-'I don't know what you mean. You are just mistaking me for someone else.'

-'Liar! You are a liar!'

One of the weird-looking men said:

-'Let's beat him.'

Mr. Thénardier looked at him; the old gentleman kicked the table and rushed over to the window.

-'Seize him!', yelled Mr. Thénardier.

-'Do you want us to beat him?', asked one of his henchmen.

-'Let's kill him', added Mrs. Thénardier.

Marius' sweaty hand was holding the pistol. He looked around. He was hesitating: what would happen if the police did not come?

Mr. Thénardier grasped a cold chisel and came up to Colonel Whitefur.

Suddenly, someone kicked down the door.

-'Good day! May I help you?', said Inspector Javert.

Javert and fourteen policemen entered the room.

-'Handcuff them all, and don't forget the old shrew', Javert thundered.

The police officers handcuffed them; Javert took a step forward and examined their faces.

-'Bigrenaille, Brujon, Tow-billion, Gueulemer, Babet and Claquesous: different crimes but always the same faces! You are so... predictable!

Javert turned his head and caught sight of Colonel Whitefur.

-'Give a glass of water to the gentleman!', said he.

Then he took a stamped paper from his pocket, set it on the table, dipped his pen in the inkwell and began to write his report.

-'Ask the gentleman to approach', said Inspector Javert.

-'Sir, he has disappeared!'

-'Gosh, he was in a hurry!', he muttered. 'How bizarre...'

On the following evening, a child dressed in rags arrived at Mr. Gorbeau's cabin. The door was closed. He started to kick it. The housekeeper opened it and asked:

-'What are you doing, little ragamuffin?'

-'Oh, it’s you!', he retorted. 'Good evening, Mrs. Bougon. I have come to see my ancestors.'

-'There’s no one here.'

-'But where is my father?'

-'In Prison!'

-'And my mother?'

-'In jail!'

-'Well... and my sisters?'

-'In jail!'

He bowed to the old lady and left.

Volume 4:

LOVE AND ADVENTURE.

BOOK FIRST: THE AFTERMATH OF THE ARRESTS.

CHAPTER I: THE LARK'S LAND.

Marius had witnessed the arrest of the Thénardiers and the escape of the white-haired man. No sooner had the police left the building than Marius slipped away. It was only nine o'clock in the evening. Marius went to Courfeyrac's flat. He told him that he did not want to go home. Courfeyrac spread a mattress on the floor and said: 'You will sleep here tonight.'

The following morning, around seven o'clock, Marius returned to the cabin, paid the rent, had his belongings loaded on a cart and moved away. He left no

forwarding address. When Inspector Javert questioned Mrs. Bougon about Marius, she just answered: 'He has vanished into thin air!' The police inspector tried to find him, but his efforts were unsuccessful.

Time passed, Marius remained at Courfeyrac's apartment. He learned that Mr. Thénardier could not communicate with his family or his lawyer. So every Monday, he sent him five francs out of pity. Besides, he was confused. In fact, he assumed that his beloved lady's name was not Ursula, but why had Mr. Thénardier called her 'the lark'? As for Colonel Whitefur, he was quite enigmatic. He conjectured that the white-haired factory worker he had seen walking down Invalids Boulevard and Colonel Whitefur were one and the same person. Was this man hiding from anyone? Was he hiding from the police? Was 'the lark' his daughter? Where did they live now? There were lots of questions but not even the beginning of an answer!

In order to take his mind off his preoccupations, he used to stroll in a meadow that was located on Glacière Street. This place was called the lark's land. Old weeping willows gazed at their reflections in a stream. The frogs and the birds did not make him feel better. He just hoped to see 'his lark', which was why he spent long hours looking at the entrance gate. Love is mad; Marius was insane, for he believed in destiny...

CHAPTER II: WHEN PRISONERS PLAN CRIMES.

Javert had not really triumphed, for he had not caught the white-haired man: a victim who flees becomes a suspect. Moreover, Montparnasse had escaped and Claquesous had vanished into thin air. He had turned into water vapor; he had slipped through the handcuffs; he had trickled through the crevices of the carriage: the police officers had been unable to tell Javert what had happened.

Brujon, the most talkative of them, had been taken to *La Force.* It was a comfortable prison. The judge hoped for disclosures, which was why the warders kept a close watch on him when he was in the courtyard, with the other inmates.

Towards the end of February 1832, they discovered that he had sent secret letters to Kruideniers (alias Bizarre), Glorieux and Barrecarosse. The police thought that Brujon was planning a crime. Hence, they arrested and jailed the three men. A week later, a warder looked through the peephole of Brujon's cell and saw him write a letter. The warder entered; Brujon ate the piece of paper; he remained in the sweatbox for a month. However, on the following morning, a bread ball landed on the ground, in the courtyard. Babet, one of the leaders of the Patron-Minette gang, picked it up, crushed it, found a message, recognized Brujon's handwriting and read:

-'Babet, there is something in Plumet Street: a gate in front of a garden.'

Babet fooled the warders and sent the note to a friend of his who had been imprisoned at the *Salpêtrière*. The latter gave the note to Magnon when they were in the visiting room. When Éponine Thénardier exited from the *Prison of the Madelonettes*, Magnon handed the note to her and whispered: 'Inquire about that.'

Éponine went to Plumet Street, saw the gate and the garden, observed the house and, a few days later, gave another note to Magnon. The note was forwarded to Babet's girlfriend and soon arrived at the above-mentioned prison. Babet and Brujon opened the message and could read:

-'Sorry; it is not interesting.'

CHAPTER III: THE FEATHERLESS SPARROW.

A few days later, Marius decided to go for a walk. He was translating Von Savigny's *Treatise on Possession*

and needed to clear his head. He, of course, went to the lark's land.

He sat on the parapet by the stream. The cheerful light penetrated the greenish foliage of the weeping willows. He heard the song of the birds and of the washerwomen. He was thinking about her. He scanned the park and beheld a familiar figure: Éponine Thénardier was walking towards him.

-'You, at last!', said the breathless girl, adjusting her ragged clothes. 'I have been searching for you. You know, I was in jail. They released me six weeks ago. So you don't live in the cabin anymore!'

-'No, I don't', retorted Marius.

-'I understand why. Because of the affair...'

Marius did not utter a word.

-'The cops are annoying people. Anyway, do you know why I want to speak to you?'

-'I haven't the slightest idea.'

-'I know the address!'

-'The address?'

-'Her address!'

He sprang forward, seized her hand and said:

-'Lead me to her place!

-'Wait a minute – you seem to be in a hurry!'

Marius fumbled in his pockets for some change, found a silver coin and handed it to Éponine. The girl opened her fingers and let the coin fall to the ground.

-'I don't want your money', said she.

BOOK SECOND: THE HOUSE ON PLUMET STREET.

CHAPTER I: A SMALL HOUSE.

On Plumet Street was an ordinary two-storey house that overlooked a small garden. The tenants were an old man and his daughter, that is to say Jean Valjean and Cosette. Mrs. Toussaint was the maid.

Why had Jean Valjean left Picpus convent? What had happened? Nothing had happened! Actually, Jean enjoyed living in the convent. He saw Cosette every day and soon regarded her as his daughter. The little girl became a young lady; the old man grew older and wiser: he understood that nobody could compel her to be a lifelong recluse. Moreover, he had never asked for her opinion. Did she want to become a nun? What was the nature of her faith? Was the ignorant girl able to make a choice? Jean thought that it was time to go, all the more so because Cosette had completed her studies. So when Mr. Fauchelevent died, Jean told the prioress that his brother had bequeathed him a substantial amount of money, which enabled him to retire. Since Cosette had not taken vows, he offered five thousand francs to the community as a token of his gratitude for Cosette's education. Then he moved to the house on Plumet Street because its façade was unremarkable. He also rented two dilapidated apartments in Paris in order to cover his tracks. One was located on West Street and the other on Gunman Street.

Jean and his daughter went to the Luxembourg Garden every day and to St. Jacques-du-Haut-Pas's Church every Sunday. They did not receive visitors. Mrs. Toussaint went shopping while Jean was drawing water from the nearest well. Jean had glued a label to the

mailbox; it said: 'Mr. Ultime Fauchelevent and his daughter.' Of course, they did not receive letters.

Since he had not been able to avoid conscription, three or four times a year, he put on his uniform and patrolled the streets of Paris. It was a credible fancy dress that fooled everybody. He had no civil status; he concealed his name, his age, and his past; being a member of the French National Guard was thus the beginning of a new identity: the ex-con was slowly turning into a respectable man who payed taxes and protected his country; he was becoming an invisible middle-class man.

CHAPTER II: COSETTE'S WORLD.

Cosette was fourteen when she left the convent. The nuns had taught her how to become a learned nun, but nobody had taught her to become a woman, that is to say a humane female adult. Cosette had had no mother. Jean Valjean was a dedicated educator, not a woman who filters out the impurity of life. He was an old man who had never been a young man, who had never loved a woman, and who did not even know what a woman was.

The house on Plumet Street was the continuation of solitude and the beginning of liberty. The garden was surrounded by high walls, but the irises and peonies fascinated her, and when she reached the gate that was at the end of the garden, she could see young men pass by. Jean had given her a fallow. She had weeded, sown seeds, and watered plants in order to turn the garden into a multicolored solitude overlooking manhood.

Cosette adored Jean; Jean venerated Cosette. They were always together. When he was seated, she rested her cheek against his white hair and said to herself: 'This man is my father, but he is also my mother.' She did not remember her real mother, and Jean never spoke of her.

On one occasion, Cosette looked in the mirror and noticed that her face had changed: she looked pretty now. Cosette's metamorphosis upset Jean, for he believed that she would attract the attention of men and that they would steal her from him.

Awareness of one's beauty is sometimes accompanied by vanity: Cosette became a Parisian fashionista! She kept sewing new dresses; her bedroom was a fashion workshop; she was besieged by fabrics, feathers and sequins. When she put on her low-cut mauve silk dress for the first time, she felt important. From that moment forth, Cosette gave up gardening in order to show her beautiful outfits to Marius and the silent visitors to the Luxembourg Garden.

BOOK THIRD: LOVE AT LAST.

CHAPTER I: COSETTE'S FEARS.

In April, Jean Valjean went on a journey. On the evening of his departure, Cosette entered the sitting room, sat on the piano stool and began to play the *Chorus of the Hunters* by *Carl Maria Von Weber*. Once she had finished playing this tune, she heard footsteps in the garden. It could not be her father, for he was absent; it could not be Mrs. Toussaint, for she was sleeping. She pressed her ear against the windowpane: someone was padding across the lawn.

She went upstairs, opened a wicket and peeped into the garden: there was nobody. She opened her bedroom window: the garden was quiet and the street empty. She thought that she was mistaken. The noise was but a hallucination caused by Von Weber's mysterious hunters. She closed the lid of the piano and forgot the footsteps.

On the following day at nightfall, she strolled in the garden and heard the same footsteps. She quickened her pace, crossed the lawn and saw two shadows in front of her. She turned around: there was nobody but her and her fears!

When Jean came back, Cosette told him what had happened to her. Jean grew anxious; he went into the garden and examined the gates. He spent that night and the two succeeding nights watching the house.

On the third night, at one o'clock in the morning, she heard her father laugh.

-'Cosette!', said he.

She opened her window; Jean was on the grassplot, pointing at his shadow.

-'Look, your mysterious man is here: the chimney pot of that building casts its shadow on the lawn.'

Cosette burst into laughter.

However, a new incident occurred a few days later.

CHAPTER II: LIKE A MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE.

In the garden, there was a stone bench near the fence. A man could easily pass his arms through the railing and touch it.

One evening, Cosette sat on this bench. The leaves were rustling in the wind. She looked up: a few clouds masked the silvery face of the moon. She stood up and started to stroll in her garden. The dew made the flowers cry. She walked past the bench again and noticed a stone lying on it. It was not there a moment before. She ran toward the house, pushed the door open and asked:

-'Mrs. Toussaint, is my father here?'

-'No, he isn't.'

-'Mrs. Toussaint, do you always close the shutters at night?'

-'Of course, I do.'

-'The house is so isolated.'

-'Oh, yes, it is. A prowler could break in, kill us, leave and escape the notice of the police, which is why I shut ourselves in the house at night.'

-'Well done!', said Cosette. 'Go and test the windows again so that I may feel safe.'

The following morning, Cosette got up and said to herself:

-'I am a fearful sparrow: there is nothing in the garden. The man and the stone are hallucinations.'

She dressed quickly, went downstairs, crossed the lawn, reached the bench and saw the stone! She lifted it and discovered a blank envelope. She opened it: there was a sheet of paper. The handwriting was small but neat.

To whom was this letter addressed? To her, probably, since a hand had set it on her bench. Who had written it? Curiosity impelled her to try to discover the mysterious author. So she read it.

CHAPTER III: THE LOVE LETTER.

'My Sweet Stranger,

Love is an ethereal feeling that gathers angels together so that they may salute the stars and the exquisite geometry of the universe.

A young lady's smile pierces her wide-brimmed hat; the heart of a young man bursts into flames; I am in love with you.

When I first saw you, I was bedazzled by your beauty. I soon realized that you were the sun that illumined my life. When I lost sight of you, I shuddered, I cried, I searched the alleys of the Luxembourg Garden and I found nothing but the melancholic chant of my loneliness. Hence, I went to your apartment: the dove had moved away. Where was she? Do migratory angels always flee from the men who wish to tame them?

You went away; my sky darkened; no North Star showed me the way to your heaven. But God leads the

righteous to Heaven, for he always enables lovers to reunite, which is why I found you.

I saw your eyes, I drank your scent, and I even sensed your soul: how can I now find the way to your heart?'…

The young lady perused the letter again. She passed her finger over the violet letters, closed her eyes and beheld Marius. She went upstairs, slammed her bedroom door and threw herself down onto her bed. She did not understand all the words but clearly perceived the nature of his feelings and hers. Cosette remained in a state of joy and bemusement all day long.

-'It is he. He is the one.. The angels showed him the way...', said she.

Love turns human beings into saints, for it is man's loftiest sentiment. Cosette metamorphosed into an iridescent butterfly that loved flowers and did not expect anything in return.

CHAPTER IV: HOW DO YOU DO?

Evening came and Jean went out as usual. Cosette put on a bodice that was a bit indecent, for one could see her neck! She pinned a rose to her hair and sighed. Mrs. Toussaint was cooking; she went downstairs, crossed the lawn and sat on the stone bench, next to the stone.

She laid her hand on the stone. The branches creaked. She turned her head: it was he! She rose to her feet.

-'Do you recognize me?', asked Marius.

-'Yes, I do', answered Cosette.

-'Have you read the letter?'

-'Yes, I have.'

-'Do you remember the day when you first looked at me?'

Cosette nodded.

-'I haven't seen you in a long time. I spent months looking for you. Fortunately, Divine providence led me here. You know, at night I watch you from behind this tree. The other day, I heard you sing. You have a beautiful voice, the voice of a nightingale.'

She sat on the bench again.

-'Are you alright?'

-'Oh my Gosh!', said she.

She suddenly felt faint. Marius put his arms around her. She rested her cheek against his chest.

-'Do you love me?', he inquired.

-'As much as you do!', she murmured.

The stars were shining; he kissed her. The breeze fevered the night; they trembled. They both looked at the skies.

After a moment of sheer silence, Cosette asked:

-'What is your name?'

-'My name is Marius. And yours?'

-'My name is Cosette... How do you do?'

BOOK FOURTH: GAVROCHE.

CHAPTER I: THE ELEPHANT.

That night, the wind was blowing. The young leaves of the sycamore trees were shivering. Gavroche was looking through the window of a barbershop in order to reconnoiter the battlefield, launch an attack and steal a bar of soap he would sell to another hairdresser.

While Gavroche was gazing at the bars of soap that had been neatly placed on a cobalt-blue porcelain plate, two well-dressed young boys turned the handle and entered. They were very small, very young and very sad. They were talking and crying at the same time; the hairdresser turned around, looked daggers at them, opened the door and pushed them outside.

The two tearful children resumed walking. The rain began to fall. Gavroche ran after them and said to them:

-'Boys, what's the matter?'

-'We don't know where we are going to spend the night', replied the elder boy.

-'People don't cry because of that', said Gavroche; 'come with me.'

The two children followed him.

They walked down St. Antony's Street and headed for the *Bastille.*

-'I assume that you are homeless orphans', said Gavroche.

-'No sir, we have a father and a mother, but we don't know where they are.'

-'You have lost your parents: it's bad luck!'

Gavroche thrust his hands into his pockets, found a coin and exclaimed:

-'Don't panic, boys! We are going to feast.'

He showed them a five-cent coin. Then he pushed them inside a bakery and flung his coin onto the counter, crying:

-'Give me five cents' worth of bread.'

The baker took a loaf of black bread and a knife.

-'In three pieces: there are three of us', he added.

The man started to slice the bread.

-'What is that?', asked Gavroche. 'I don't want black bread. Tonight is a special night: give me white bread.'

The baker sliced a loaf of white bread and took the money. Gavroche distributed it to the boys, who gobbled it. Then they left the bakery and headed for the Bastille.

They soon reached Charonne Street.

-'Good evening Gavroche', said a young man who was wearing blue spectacles.

-'Montparnasse, is that you?', asked Gavroche.

-'Hush!', murmured Montparnasse, 'Keep your voice down.'

He led Gavroche and the boys to a dark place.

-'Do you know where I'm going?', asked Montparnasse.

-'To jail', retorted Gavroche.

-'You're such a funny boy! I have an appointment with Babet.'

-'I thought that he was in prison.'

-'He has escaped.'

-'And what will you do tonight?'

-'Things... but what about you?

-'I am going to put them to bed.'

-'Where?'

-'Where I live.'

-'And where do you live?'

-'In the elephant of the Bastille.'

-'That thing!'

-'It is a comfortable place, there is no wind...'

-'Who are they?'

-'A present from a hairdresser.'

A policeman looked at them. Montparnasse shook hands with Gavroche and fled. Gavroche and the boys proceeded along St. Antony's Street, reached Bastille Square, and climbed the ladder that led to the plaster bowels of the elephant.

On the following morning, a man emerged from St. Antony's Street, crossed the square, positioned himself under the elephant and whistled. Gavroche opened the trapdoor and saw Montparnasse.

-'We need you', said the young man.

-'I'm coming', answered Gavroche.

The lad climbed down the leg of the elephant and shook hands with Montparnasse. Then they headed for St. Antony's Street.

CHAPTER II: THE ESCAPE.

That same night, Brujon, Guelemer, and Thénardier had decided to escape from prison.

Brujon had spent a month in solitary confinement, which had enabled him to make a rope, plan their escape and convince Babet and Montparnasse to help them.

Brujon and Guelemer began to pierce a hole in the ventilation shaft with a small knife. It took them an hour to widen the hole and haul themselves up onto the roof. The storm was raging.

-'This is a good day to flee', exclaimed Brujon.

There was an abyss between them and the surrounding wall. They looked down: the musket of a guard was gleaming. They fastened one end of Brujon's rope to an iron bar, flung the other end over the outer wall, crossed the abyss, landed on a slippery roof, climbed down the downspout of the bathhouse, crossed the courtyard, opened the front door and rushed out. A few moments later, they met Babet and Montparnasse, who were prowling in the neighborhood.

As for Thénardier, at two o'clock in the morning, he picked the lock of the door of his cell, reached the roof, found Brujon’s rope and noticed that it was broken. Hence, he headed towards a ramshackle building that was close to the wall of the prison. At three o'clock in the morning, he was lying on the roof of this house, clinging to the tiles and the piece of rope. He beheld his friends, but he did not dare to call to them for fear of drawing the guards’ attention to himself.

He dropped the rope; it fell near them.

-'A rope', said Babet.

-'My rope!', exclaimed Brujon.

They looked up and so Thénardier.

-'Hurry up!', said Montparnasse. 'Tie the two pieces together and throw him the rope.'

Thénardier caught it as it flew past him and said:

-'My fingers are numb with cold.'

-'Fasten the rope to the wall.'

-'I can't.'

-'One of us must climb this downspout in order to help him.'

-'It's too weak! ... A child could do that, not an adult', said Brujon.

-'Where could we find a skinny child?', asked Guelemer.

-'I know where', answered Montparnasse.

The young man began to run in the direction of the Bastille. Seven or eight minutes later, he and Gavroche appeared.

-'Are you a boy or a man?', asked Guelemer.

-'A boy like me is more courageous than a bunch of potbellied ruffians like you', retorted Gavroche.

-'He is a smooth-talker!', exclaimed Babet.

-'What do you want?', asked Gavroche.

-'Climb this downspout with this rope and fasten it to the crossbar of that window', answered Montparnasse.

Gavroche examined the rope, the downspout, the wall, the windows, and whistled disdainfully.

-'Is is a matter of life and death; you can save the life of that man', resumed Montparnasse.

-'All right', said the lad.

He took off his shoes. Guelemer seized him, set him on the roof of the shanty and handed him the rope. Gavroche put his hand on the downspout and looked up; he met the man's gaze.

-'Oh! That's my old man!', he exclaimed.

He put the rope in his teeth and climbed the downspout. When he reached the top of the shanty, he fastened the rope to the crossbar of the window. A few moments later, the man was on the pavement.

-'What do we do next?', asked Thénardier.

-'There is an isolated house on Plumet Street that needs to be burgled!', said Brujon.

-'That sounds great.'

None of the men spoke to Gavroche, who expected to be thanked, at least by his father.

-'Is that all?', asked Gavroche impatiently. 'Since I do not want to hold you up, I wish you a good day.'

And he went away.

BOOK FIFTH: DELIGHT AND GRIEF.

CHAPTER I: INTOXICATED BY LOVE.

When Marius kissed Cosette for the first time, he realized that his soul was definitely linked to hers. So he came every evening. They touched each other, gazed at each other, and embraced each other, but they always remained decent. However, love does not turn people into wits: most of the time, they said stupid things.

-'Marius', she said once, 'my name is Euphrasie.'

-'Euphrasie! You told me that your name was Cosette.'

-'Cosette is a very ugly name. In fact, it is a nickname. My real name is Euphrasie. Do you like that name?'

-'Yes, I do; but Cosette is not ugly.'

-'Do you prefer Cosette to Euphrasie?'

-'Yes, I do.'

-'I that case, I like it too. You are right, Cosette is a pretty name. So call me Cosette.'

On another occasion she gazed at him and exclaimed:

-'You are handsome, witty and much more intelligent than I, but I can love someone better than you!'

In this ocean of felicity, they kept on shedding tears. The death of a ladybug, a feather fallen from a nest and a broken branch aroused their pity. Love exaggerates

feelings and leads people to lose touch with reality: Cholera was killing thousands of Parisians, and they ignored the problem! However, Marius told Cosette that he was an orphan, that his name was Marius Pontmercy, that he was a lawyer and a translator, that his father was a war hero, and that his grandfather was a loathsome, wealthy man. As for her, she told him that she had been brought up by the Bernardines of the Perpetual Adoration, that her mother was dead, that her father's name was Mr. Fauchelevent, and that he was a righteous man who gave all his money to the poor.

Marius' happiness had made him forget Mr. Gorbeau's cabin, the arrest of the Thénardiers and the strange attitude of her father. Sometimes, he closed his eyes in order to examine her through the magnifying glass of his hopes. What did he want? What did they want? They did not know, but they believed that they had arrived at their destination. Love is not a journey; it is the destination.

CHAPTER II: A GHOST IN RAGS.

Neither Jean Valjean nor Mrs. Toussaint knew that Cosette was in love with Marius, for he never set foot in the house. When he was with Cosette, they hid in a recess, near the front door, so that they might neither be seen nor be heard from the street. They sat on the grass, talked with their eyes and whispered. This bliss lasted two months. However, on one occasion, reality winked at him.

On the 3rd of June 1832, Marius was walking along Invalids Boulevard when he caught sight of Éponine. He acted normally and then rushed into Plumet Street. Éponine followed him. She saw him enter the garden. She came up to the railing, sat down and waited for an hour.

At ten o'clock, six men went down Plumet Street. They reached the gates of the garden.

-'This is the place', said one of them.

-'Is there a dog?', asked another.

-'I don't know, but I have poisoned meatballs.'

-'Look out! There is a dog over there.'

-'It's not a dog, it's a bitch.'

-'I am not a bitch', said Éponine, 'I am a girl!'

Thénardier, Claquesous, Guelemer, Babet, Brujon and Montparnasse approached her and stared at her in amazement. She flung herself into her father's arms.

-'Daddy', said she, 'You have been released from prison! I am so happy.'

-'They did not release me; let's say that I am on holiday.'

Éponine turned to the five ruffians.

-'Hello boys; how are you?'

-'They are fine', said her father. 'It's no time to say hello. Leave us alone; we are busy.'

-'But there is nothing interesting in this house. It's a hovel filled with rats and mendicants.'

-'Go away!', growled her father.

-'I don't want you to break into this house! If you enter this garden, I'll scream and even call the police.'

-'Sweetie', said her father, 'thieves steal: that's par for the course.'

-'You bother me.'

-'But we must earn our living; we must eat'

-'Go to the devil!'

The six men took a few steps backward so that they might talk to one another in private. Since they smelled trouble, they decided to leave and look for a place to hide. So they headed for *Pantin*.

CHAPTER III: MARIUS' ADDRESS.

In the meantime, Marius was with Cosette. She was sad and had wept.

-'What's the matter?', asked Marius.

-'This morning, my father told me to pack. He must resolve an issue and I may go with him.'

Marius turned white.

-'Are you feeling all right?', she asked.

-'Would you mind repeating?'

-'I said that my father told me to pack because he must go to England in order to resolve an issue.'

-'But this is awful! When will you leave?'

-'I don't know.'

-'And when will you come back?'

-'I don't know either.'

-'Cosette, must you go with him?'

-'Of course, I must: he is my father. But if we go to England, I will give you my address so that you may come and see me.'

-'Cosette, I can't go to England, for I have no money. I owe Courfeyrac 200 francs. My old hat is only worth one franc; my coat does not have buttons; my shirt is full of holes. Cosette, I am poor. You only see me at night, and you give me your love; if you saw me in the daytime, you would give me a penny! Go to England! I can't afford the visa.'

He leaned against a tree and fell silent. Cosette began to cry.

-'Do not weep', he said.

-'I will miss you...', She murmured.

-'Do you love me?'

-'I adore you!'

-'So I won't come tomorrow.'

-'Why?'

-'I'll come the day after tomorrow.'

-'But why?'

-'You'll understand later.'

-'A day without you is sheer torture.'

-'By the way, you must know my address; I live at 16 Glass-making Street.'

He took a penknife from his pocket and carved his address on the plaster wall.

-'You know, Cosette, God always enables lovers to reunite.'

-'Hence, I will pray so that you will succeed.

Marius kissed her; her tears dried up; he kissed her again; her face lit up.

When Marius left the garden, he saw Éponine follow the ruffians...

CHAPTER IV: A NOTE OF DISCORD.

Mr. Gillenormand was ninety-one years old. He still lived with his daughter at 6 Filles-du-Calvaire Street. He was in good health, but his daughter said that he had changed, for he did not slap his servants across the face anymore and he had stopped complaining about trifles. Actually, he was sad because he had been waiting for Marius for four years.

On the fourth of June 1832, the male servant entered the sitting room and said:

-'Sir, can you receive Mr. Marius?'

-'Mr. Marius?'

-'There's a young man here who wishes to talk to you and who says that he is Mr. Marius.'

Mr. Gillenormand stammered:

-'Show him in.'

A young man entered, and it was Marius. His grandfather said abruptly:

-'I assume that you have come to apologize.'

-'No, sir. I have come to ask permission to marry a young woman.'

-'You are only twenty-one! Do you have a job and some money? How much does a lawyer make?'

-'Nothing!'

-'I understand what you mean; the girl must be rich.'

-'As rich as I.'

-'What! No dowry?'

-'No.'

-'A forthcoming inheritance?'

-'I don't think so.'

-'She is penniless! What does her father do for a living?'

-'I don’t know.'

-'And what’s her name?'

-'Miss Fauchelevent.'

-'I have never heard of her. So you are twenty-one, you don't work, I give you twelve hundred francs every year, and the girl is poor! Lady Pontmercy will never be able to pay the bills.'

-'Please, sir, allow me to marry her.'

-'Certainly not!'

-'Please, grandfather.'

-'Never!'

-'Grandfather, I love her. The first time I saw her, I was strolling in the Luxembourg Garden. At first, I did not pay attention to her. Then her beauteous eyes began to mesmerize me. Even the pinkish peonies that grow in her garden on Plumet Street cannot eclipse her.'

-'Plumet Street... Plumet Street! Your cousin Théodule told me that there was an untidy garden on that street and that the owner was a well-dressed, pretty girl. Marius, you can fall in love, but those penniless girls are mistresses, not wives. So I allow you to date her, but I forbid you to marry her.''

Marius turned pale. He rose from his chair, walked towards the door, turned around and said:

-'Five years ago you insulted my father; now you are insulting my future wife. You are a despicable man. Farewell, Sir.'

He slammed the door behind him.

The old man froze. His daughter entered the sitting room and said:

-'Father, I heard shouts. What happened?'

-'Run after him! Bring him back! What have I done to deserve this? He is mad! He is going away! This time he will not come back!'

BOOK SIXTH: THE 5TH OF JUNE 1832.

CHAPTER I: A FUNERAL MARCH.

In the spring of 1832, the Parisians were smouldering with anger. Any trifle could arouse their wrath, and this trifle was General Lamarque's death.

Lamarque was a man of action. The populace loved him because he was a leftist who hated Wellington and had been loyal to the Emperor. His death was not a surprise; it was just an event that drove the poor to despair, especially those who lived in St. Antony's: they had already gathered weapons and were ready to fight.

It was raining. Ten thousand *National Guards* were marching ahead of the hearse; one hundred officers holding laurel branches were marching behind it. They were followed by a restless crowd. The Government was lying in ambush: five hundred policemen were stationed along the route and fifty thousand soldiers were awaiting the King's orders.

When the hearse arrived at Bastille Square, Lord Fitz-James appeared on a balcony. The crowd threw stones at him as the workers of St. Antony's left their factories in order to join the funeral procession.

The hearse reached Austerlitz Bridge and halted. Lord Lafayette began to speak; the crowd fell silent; he bade Lamarque farewell; a man on horseback and clad in black waved a red flag; people shouted: 'Lamarque to the Pantheon, Lafayette to the City Hall!'

The dragoons were on the opposite bank; they stationed themselves quickly along Morland's Quay. The hearse came up to them; they let it pass; women fled. What happened next? Nobody knows. However, we know for certain that the crowd heard three gunshots and saw the dragoons gallop along Bourdon's Boulevard.

Then stones rained down. A shooting broke out. They improvised a barricade. Some young men attacked the municipal guards; the dragoons rushed up to them; the crowd dispersed.

In the Latin Quarter, in Les Halles Quarter, along the boulevards, and in the densely populated parts of Paris, breathless men, workers, students and militiamen erected barricades, but Louis Philippe remained perfectly serene.

CHAPTER II:
GAVROCHE ARMS HIMSELF WITH A GUN AND MEETS THE FRIENDS OF THE ABC.

Gavroche was going down Menilmontant Street; he was holding a bouquet of wild flowers. Streams of frantic men and women were flowing into the streets. The boy caught sight of an old flintlock pistol, which was in a display case in a bric-a-brac shop. He threw his bouquet on the pavement and said to the merchant:

-'Madam, I'm going to borrow your thingummy.'

He grasped the gun and ran away, singing:

The wealthy are queer,
The poor are witty.
The turmoil they fear,
Attracts me greatly.
Let's steal from the rich
To buy me a quiche!

Gavroche was going off to war.

He soon reached Cabbage-bridge Street and beheld a cake shop. He fumbled in his pockets for some money, but he did not find any. He would have liked to eat a delicious apple turnover before making a leap into the unknown. Gavroche went off to war on an empty stomach.

Two minutes later, he went down St. Louis' Street. He caught sight of a group of chubby middle-class men. He shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed:

-'Wealthy people are gluttons! They keep on eating and drinking. They go to the restaurant twice a day. Hopefully someday an ogre will devour them.'

Gavroche discovered that the hammer of his gun was broken. However, he brandished it in order to imitate the grown-ups. He headed for St. Gervasius' Square and soon reached St. John's Market. Enjolras, Courfeyrac, Combeferre, Feuilly, Bahorel and Prouvaire were already there; they were armed. Gavroche asked:

-'Where are you going?'

-'Come with us', answered Courfeyrac; 'you are going to help us.'

Bahorel, who was a professional rioter, was wearing a red waistcoat. A passer-by shouted:

-'The Reds are coming!'

-'Red, the Reds!', exclaimed Bahorel. 'Those stupid middle-class men fear that color. As for me, I don't tremble with fear when I see a poppy or the Little Red Ridding Hood! Sometimes I feel as if I were a bullfighter in front of bellicose cows.'

Enjolras' retinue was composed of young men. There was also a very old man, who was trying to quicken his pace.

-'Who is he?', asked Gavroche.

-'He's an old codger', answered Courfeyrac.

It was Mr. Mabeuf: an impoverished bookseller who once employed Marius.

-'Mr. Mabeuf, go home!', yelled Courfeyrac.

-'Why?'

-'We are going to fight.'

-'That's fine by me.'

-'There will be gunshots and explosions.'

-'That's fine by me, and where are you going?'

-'We are going to the Tuileries in order to overthrow the government.'

-'I am going with you.'

-'What a fierce old fellow!', muttered a student. 'He must be an ex-member of the Convention, a kind of regicide!'

The merry crowd headed for St. Denis' Street.

BOOK SEVENTH: CORINTHIA CAFÉ.

CHAPTER I: BEFORE THE TEMPEST.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when Bossuet and Joly entered Corinthia Café. They went upstairs, made themselves comfortable and spent the morning eating and drinking. At two o'clock in the afternoon, pandemonium broke out in St. Denis' Street. They went downstairs and saw Enjolras, Gavroche, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Prouvaire, Combeferre, Bahorel and a noisy crowd. The inhabitants of the street panicked. The passers-by fled; the shopkeepers closed the shutters; the mob rushed into Corinthia Café.

In ten minutes' time, twenty iron bars were wrenched from the café's railing and a part of the cobblestones was removed. The waitresses gave them a hand. An omnibus passed at the end of the street. Bossuet ran toward it, stopped it, made the passengers alight, dismissed the driver, positioned it across the street and unharnessed the horses. The barricade looked fine.

Grantaire, who was as drunk as a lord, took advantage of the chaos to steal a kiss from the waitress.

-'You are a drunkard', said Enjolras; 'go to bed so that the young lady may not breathe in your bad breath. Grantaire, you're a disgrace to us and the revolution!'

Those reproaches came as a blow. He sat down, rested his elbows on a table, looked at Enjolras and said to him:

-'You know that I believe in you.'

-'Go away!'

-'Let me sleep here.'

-'Go and sleep somewhere else.'

-'Pleeeeease...'

-'Grantaire, you are an idiot.'

-'I am not.'

His head fell heavily on the table. Enjolras shook his head in disgust: his friend had just fallen asleep.

The rain stopped falling. St. Denis' Street was shrouded in darkness. The streetlamp illumined their expressionless faces. The red flag turned violet. Panic was in the air.

CHAPTER II: THE SPY.

The street was quiet; Enjolras was nervous; he came up to Gavroche, who was making cartridges and gazing at a weird-looking man.

-'Since you are short and discreet', said Enjolras, 'you are going to reconnoiter the neighborhood. I can hear gunshots, but the army is not here yet: it's weird, isn't it?'

-'The discreet short boy will be happy to help you. One can always trust the short fellows. As for the tall ones, they are quite dangerous! Can you see that man over there?'

-'Yes, I can.'

-'He is an informant!'

-'Are you sure?'

-'Two weeks ago, he boxed my ears just because I was walking on Royal Bridge's parapet.'

Enjolras waved his hand discreetly; four tall, strong men positioned themselves behind the man. Then Enjolras approached him and asked:

-'Who are you?'

The man blenched. Enjolras looked daggers at him. He realized that he had been recognized.

-'I am Mr. Jobert; how do you do?'

-'The boy recognized you: you are a bloody informant.'

-'I am not an informant; I am a police officer.'

-'What's your name?'

-'Javert; Inspector Javert.'

The four men grasped his harms and trussed him with a rope. One of them found his identity card, on which was written: 'Robert Saturnin JAVERT; Police inspector; aged fifty-two.' It had been signed by the Police Prefect Mr. Gisquet.

-'The mouse has swallowed the cat', said Gavroche to Javert.

Enjolras hushed the crowd and said:

-'Look at him; he is an informant.'

He turned to Javert and added:

-'You will be shot ten minutes before the barricade is breached.'

-'Why don't you kill me now?'

-'We are saving our gunpowder.'

-'Use a knife.'

-'We are judges, not murderers.'

Then he said to Gavroche:

-'Do what I asked you to do.'

-'Sir, yes sir!', retorted Gavroche. 'By the way, you will give me his gun. Since I leave the musician with you, I want to take hold of the clarinet.'

He saluted merrily and passed through the opening in the barricade.

CHAPTER III: THE FIRST CASUALTIES.

Crowds are like snowballs: as they roll along the streets, they collect many boisterous men. Among the passers-by who had joined the rabble led by Enjolras, Combeferre and Courfeyrac, there was a restless man who resembled a hooligan. This man, whose name or nickname was Le Cabuc, was as drunk as a skunk. He seemed to be examining a large house located at the end of St. Denis' Street. All at once he exclaimed:

-'You know, comrades, this is a well-situated house: we should fire from there.'

-'You are right, but it is closed', said one of his friends.

-'Let us knock at the door.'

-'They won't open.'

The men reached the house. Le Cabuc knocked at the door; no one answered. He started to hit it with his riffle butt; a gray-haired old man who was holding a candle opened it timidly.

-'What do you want?', said the caretaker.

-'Get in', retorted Le Cabuc.

-'It is impossible.'

-'Open the door.'

-'I can't.'

Le Cabuc took hold of his riffle and aimed at him; the candle gave out a dim light: the old man did not see him.

-'Open that door.'

-'I won't.'

Le Cabuc shot him dead!

A long silence ensued.

Then the sound of a gun that is cocked startled him. He turned around and saw Enjolras' inexpressive face.

-'Drop the gun, get down on your knees and place your hands behind your head', he said.

Le Cabuc obeyed.

The rioters of the barricade rushed into the house and fell silent.

-'Think or pray', said Enjolras, 'you have one minute left.'

-'Have mercy on me', murmured the murderer.

The baby-faced revolutionary fired once; the crowd blenched.

-'Throw that outside', shouted Enjolras; then he added:

-'This man killed an innocent old man; I killed a murderer: that's the rule. We are revolutionaries, not criminals. We fight for justice, freedom and peace. Someday, my friends, we will live in a world where concord and joy will reign supreme. So that this glorious future may come, we are going to defeat the middle-class men.'

The insurgents cheered him.

BOOK EIGHTH: THE GRANDEUR OF DESPAIR.

CHAPTER I: WHEN THE RED FLAG FELL.

Ten o'clock struck. A song sang by a young voice broke the silence.

Under the moonlight,
My friend Bugeaud,
Lend me a truncheon
To protect myself.
The cops are coming;
I have no weapon;
Give me a riffle
To attack the hounds.

-'It's Gavroche', said Enjolras.

The boy climbed the barricade and said:

-'Give me a gun, for the soldiers are coming.'

-'Do you want my pistol?', asked Enjolras.

-'No, I want a big gun.'

The forty-three insurgents took up their battle stations. Several minutes elapsed; they heard footsteps in the distance. The noise grew louder and louder; then it stopped.

-'Who goes there?', shouted a voice.

-'The French Revolution', yelled Enjolras.

A purple flash illumined all the facades; an explosion made the red flag fall.

-'Comrades!', shouted Courfeyrac. 'Don't fire; let's wait until they are in the street.'

-'Above all', said Enjolras, 'let's raise the flag again.'

He picked up the standard.

-'Who is bold and good-hearted? Who is going to plant the flag on the barricade again?'

Nobody answered.

-'Isn't there a volunteer?'

Mr. Mabeuf exited Corinthia Café and said:

-'I am going to plant the flag.'

-'It is he; it is the ex-member of the Convention: the regicide!', said many ecstatic voices.

He came up to Enjolras; the insurgents moved aside to let him pass. The young man handed him the flag. He slowly climbed the barricade. His antediluvian arm, which was holding the red banner, emerged from the gloom: 1793 waved the flag of terror again.

-'Long live the revolution!', said the old man. 'Long live the republic! You, over there, go away!'

-'Fire!', a voice commanded.

Bullets rained on the barricade. They pierced his chest; he let go of the red banner and fell backwards on the pavement. Rivulets of blood flowed beneath him. His sad old face looked at the skies.

-'Those regicides are heroes!', exclaimed Enjolras. 'Citizens, this old man must inspire the young. Let us bury this hero in our hearts in order to remember him everlastingly.'

Enjolras bent down, kissed the old man's brow, removed his coat, showed the holes to the crowd and said:

-'This is our new flag; hoist it!'

CHAPTER II: THE BARREL OF GUNPOWDER.

Marius witnessed Mr. Mabeuf's death; he saw the soldiers kill Bahorel; he heard Courfeyrac shout *follow me* and Gavroche yell *help*. He grasped his pistols and ran toward the barricade in order to save Gavroche and Courfeyrac.

Amid the explosions and hatred, he caught sight of a barrel of gunpowder. He dropped his pistols, rolled the barrel up the barricade, seized a torch and climbed onto the barrel so that the soldiers might see him. He waved his torch and shouted:

-'Go away! If you don't go away, I'll blow up the barricade!'

-'If you blow up the barricade!', said the sergeant, 'You will die.'

-'Sure I will', retorted Marius.

He moved the torch closer to the barrel of powder. The assailants withdrew in a disorganized manner. The rioters went wild with joy; Courfeyrac even embraced Marius.

Enjolras looked around an asked:

-'Where is Prouvaire?'

-'Since he is neither dead nor wounded', answered Combeferre, 'he must have been captured.'

Enjolras turned to Javert.

-'But we have a bargaining chip!'

A voice suddenly broke the silence.

-'Long live France! Long live the future!'

-'It is he', exclaimed Combeferre.

They heard a gunshot and the sound of someone falling on the ground.

-'They have killed him', murmured Combeferre.

Enjolras looked at Javert again and said:

-'Your friends have just killed you!'

CHAPTER III: THE TWILIGHT OF ÉPONINE'S LIFE.

Marius was walking along St. Denis' Street when he heard someone whisper his name. He looked around and saw nothing.

-'At your feet', said the voice.

He bent down and saw a silhouette crawling towards him.

-'Éponine!', he exclaimed; 'why are you wearing men's clothes? And what are you doing here?'

-'Marius, I am bleeding!'

-'You must be wounded. I am going to carry you into Corinthia Café's hall.'

He passed his arm under her and touched her left hand. She cried out in pain. Then she raised her hand to him.

-'There is a big hole', said Marius.

-'The bullet pierced my chest, too.'

-'Poor child!... What must I do?'

He fell silent; she closed her eyes.

-'Marius', said she, 'I think that I was in love with you.'

-'I am going to carry you into Corinthia Café's hall; there must be a physician there.'

She looked at him and smiled.

-'Will you kiss my brow when I am dead?'

-'Éponine, you cannot die: your life has just begun. You must live so that you may fulfill your ambitions.'

-'I have fulfilled all my ambitions.'

She continued to smile.

-'In my pocket, there is a letter for you.'

He searched her overall's pocket for the letter.

-'Marius, will you be more humane once I am dead?'

He did not understand her question.

She closed her eyes again. The butterfly dressed in rags expired peacefully.

Marius kissed her brow, seized the letter and went back to Corinthia Café.

There he opened the letter and read:

-'Dearest Marius, my father wants us to leave as soon as possible. Tonight we will stay at 7 Gunman Street. In a week's time, we will be in England. COSETTE; the 4th of June 1832.'

He took a piece of paper and a pen from his pocket. He wrote:

-'To Miss Cosette Fauchelevent, 7 Gunman Street, Paris. My grandfather does not allow me to marry you. I am poor; you are not rich; we cannot marry. I went to your place, but you were no longer there. I love you, which is why I must die. When you read this letter, my soul will be near you.'

He folded the letter, took another piece of paper and wrote:

-'My name is Marius Pontmercy. Carry my body to Mr. Gillenormand's flat. He is my grandfather. He lives at 6 Filles-du-Calvaire Street.'

-'Gavroche!', said he.

-'Yes sir', the boy answered.

-'Can you do me a favor?'

-'Of course, I can.'

-'Could you give this letter to Miss Cosette tomorrow morning?'

-'Yes, I can; I'll deliver it tomorrow morning.'

He grasped it, left the café and headed for Gunman Street.

BOOK NINTH: GUNMAN STREET.

CHAPTER I: A TALKATIVE BLOTTER.

At five o'clock in the afternoon, Mrs. Toussaint set a plate of cold chicken on the dining room table. Cosette peeked at the food, said that she had a headache and retired to her bedroom. Jean Valjean ate a chicken breast and listened Mrs. Toussaint, who was talking about the 'revolution'.

After dinner, he went to the sitting room and sat down by the desk. His gaze fell upon a blotter. He read:

-'Dearest Marius, my father wants us to leave as soon as possible. Tonight we will stay at 7 Gunman Street. In a week's time, we will be in England. COSETTE; the 4th of June 1832.'

He felt faint. Jean regarded Cosette as his daughter. He loved her as a man loves his mother or his sister. Since he remembered neither is mother nor his sister, he loved her as the desert loves the rain.

Mrs. Toussaint entered.

-'By the bye, where are they taking place?', he inquired.

-'I beg your pardon.'

-'Didn't you tell me that there are riots in Paris?'

-'Ah, that! Yes, there are riots in St. Denis' Street. They even have erected a barricade. People say that the army attacked it and killed some of the mutineers.'

-'Do we know the name of the victims?'

-'Oh, Mr. Fauchelevent, in this affair there are no victims but dead culprits. It is said that those men are wild animals.'

-'Wild animals lying in ambush in order to capture innocent young ladies.'

-'What do you mean?'

-'Nothing, Mrs. Toussaint.'

Five minutes later, he was walking along the street.

He looked at the moon, tried to locate the source of distressing sounds and headed for St. Denis' Street.

CHAPTER II: THE ENEMY OF LIGHT.

Gunman street was deserted. Eleven o' clock struck. An explosion in the direction of Les Halles made Jean jump. A second blast made him quicken his pace. All at once he heard footsteps near him. He looked around and caught sight of a little boy who was walking towards him.

-'Hello', said Gavroche.

-'Good evening, little boy. What are you doing here?'

-'I am looking for food: I am starving!'

Jean took a silver coin from his purse and handed it to Gavroche, but the child was already a few paces away: he was examining the streetlamp.

-'What a mess! You still have light here.'

He threw a stone at the streetlamp and broke the lamp housing.

-'That's much better. Shade is the friend of revolutionaries.'

Jean came up to him and gave him the silver coin.

-'Are you trying to bribe me?'

-'You are hungry; go and buy you something to eat.'

-'You’re a good man. The little boy thanks you.'

And he bowed to him.

-'Do you live here?'
-'Yes, I do.'
-'Could you tell me where Nº 7 is?'
-'It's over there.'
-'I am looking for a girl named Closet.'
-'You mean Cosette?'
-'Do you know her?'
-'I am his father.'
-'Nice to meet you.'

Gavroche handed him the letter, saluted and left.

A few moments later, one heard the sound of glass shattering: Gavroche was heading for Hay Street.

CHAPTER III: WHAT A RELIEF!

Jean retraced his steps to his house, went upstairs silently, and opened the door noiselessly: Cosette and Mrs. Toussaint were sleeping. He took off his shoes, closed the front door and lit a candle. Then he entered the sitting room, sat on an armchair, rested his elbows on the desk, unfolded the letter and started to shake with fear. He read:

-'... I love you, which is why I must die. When you read this letter, my soul will be near you.'

What a relief, and what a good idea! Daughters should never get married. If Juliet had not met Romeo, she would still be alive! What a joy it is to witness the death of a man you don't know but hate from the bottom of your heart!

He went downstairs and woke up the caretaker.

An hour later, Jean exited the building. He was wearing a National Guard uniform. The caretaker had easily found, in the neighborhood, the missing pieces which he needed in order to complete his fancy dress. He was carrying a loaded gun and a cartridge box filled with cartridges.

He strode off in the direction of Les Halles Quarter.

CHAPTER IV: A GNAT IN A DESERTED STREET.

Gavroche soon reached Vielles-Haudriettes Street. He beheld a hand-cart and a man who was sleeping underneath it.

-'This cart could strengthen our barricade!', he said.

He gently tugged at the cart. Then he took a piece of paper and a pencil from his pocket and wrote:

-'French Republic. I have borrowed your cart. Gavroche.'

He placed the paper in the man's pocket and went away, pulling the hand-cart.

Let me say that it was a very bad idea: some National Guards were standing at the end of that street.

-'Where are you going, you little ragamuffin?', shouted a sergeant.

-'Citizen', retorted Gavroche, 'I am not a little ragamuffin.'

-'Where are you going, you little rogue?'

-'Sir, I am neither a ragamuffin nor a rogue but a big boy.'

-'Where are you going, little boy?'

-'Big! The boy is big!'

The sergeant aimed his rifle at him.

-'Your Highness, I am looking for a bakery: I am starving.'

Gavroche pushed the cart violently; it knocked the man down, which enabled him to flee.

When he reached Red-Children Street, he halted. He pricked up his hears and heard nothing. Hence, he started to sing.

We conquered the castle;
We killed the king;
We freed our nation;

His brothers came back;

We dethroned big Loulou
And Charlie too.
Let's do the same
With Cousin Louis-Philippe.

Volume 5:

JEAN VALJEAN.

BOOK FIRST: A WAR BETWEEN FOUR WALLS.

CHAPTER I: AFTER THE TEMPEST.

The thirty-five insurgents spent the night rebuilding the barricade. They also heaped the dead onto the pavement, at the corner of Mondétour Lane. There

were four National Guards among them. Enjolras had their uniforms laid aside and advised the insurrectionists to take a two-hour rest. Nobody followed his advice. Feuilly preferred to engrave this motto on the wall which faced the café:

Long live the free nations of the world.

They were hungry, but there were no more food supplies. There comes a time when any barricade becomes the raft of the Medusa: hunger is the fate of the mutineers. Since Enjolras had forbidden them to drink liquor, they drank water. This riot was a teetotal revolution.

At five o' clock in the morning, Enjolras reconnoitered the area. When he came back, he said to them:

-'It seems that all the soldiers stationed in France have converged on Paris. They will attack in one hour's time. As for the Parisians, they won't help us; those traitors have abandoned us. However, the position is good and the barricade solid. So thirty men can defend the street. Since there are thirty-five of us here, five persons will have to leave.'

He pointed at the four uniforms he had laid aside and added:

-'If you put that on, nobody will identify you.'

-'Gentlemen', said Combeferre, 'you are sons, husbands, or fathers. Consequently, your loved ones want you to stay alive, all the more so because you support them. If you died, they would fall into destitution. So I command breadwinners to take a step forward.'

Nobody moved.

-'Hurry up!', barked Enjolras.

They finally obeyed: five men took a step forward.

-'There are only four uniforms', said one of them.

All of a sudden, a fifth uniform appeared: Jean Valjean had just joined the barricade. He removed his jacket and placed it on the pile of clothes.

-'Who is this man?', asked Bossuet.

-'A man who will save another man', replied Combeferre.

-'I know him', added Marius.

Enjolras turned to Jean Valjean and said:

-'Welcome, citizen. Do you know that we are about to die?'

Jean did not answer; he just helped an insurgent to put on his uniform.

CHAPTER II: CRUCIFIXION.

Marius was bemused. How had Mr. Fauchelevent managed to reach the barricade? Why was he here? Jean did not speak to him, he did not even look at him, which suited Marius, for he was too shy to address that enigmatic man.

The five men left the barricade. One of them wept as he took his leave. Then Enjolras went down to the cellar.

-'Do you want anything?', said Enjolras to Inspector Javert.

-'When will you kill me?'

-'Later! We can't afford to waste a cartridge.'

-'I am thirsty.'

Enjolras poured water into a glass and helped him to drink.

-'Is that all?', inquired Enjolras.

Javert turned his head: he caught sight of Jean Valjean. He closed his eyes and murmured: 'Yes, it was that simple'.

The insurgents took up their battle stations. Enjolras seized his rifle. A metallic sound broke the

silence: a bronze cannon appeared at the end of the street.

-'Fire!', shouted Enjolras.

The whole barricade fired at the soldiers who were positioning the cannon. The street was covered in smoke. When it dissipated, the cannon had been placed in position; none of the soldiers had been struck.

-'Reload your guns', said Enjolras.

A cannonball hit the barricade and broke one of the wheels of the omnibus.

-'It is I!', shouted a cheerful voice.

Gavroche's arrival was more noticeable than the explosion of the cannonball.

They gathered around him.

-'What are you doing here?', asked one of them.

-'And you, what are you doing here?', answered the boy.

-'Who told you to come back?', interjected Marius. 'Did you deliver my letter?'

-'Citizen Marius, I gave the letter to the caretaker. The young lady was asleep. She will read it when she wakes up.'

Gavroche saw Jean but did not recognize him; he added:

-'Give me my gun.'

Courfeyrac handed him a rifle.

A handsome blond young lieutenant positioned himself behind the cannon. He was lost in thought.

-'What a pity!', said Combeferre. 'I assume that war will disappear when the last king dies. He is so young! He might be our brother.'

-'Yes, he might', said Enjolras.

-'I can't kill him.'

-'I will do your dirty work.'

A tear trickled down Enjolras' marble cheek. He pulled the trigger. The Lieutenant fell; his golden head hit the pavement. A rivulet of blood stained the morning; a gunshot crucified humanity again.

CHAPTER III: COSETTE AND PARIS ARE WAKING UP.

Cosette woke up. She did not know what was going on in Paris. She rose to her feet and thought about Marius: had he received her letter? Her gaze fell upon the cornice: there was a swallow's nest. The female had spread its wings over the fledglings; the male was feeding them. The golden sunbeams illumined the very epitome of conjugal bliss.

-'I, too, would like to start a family', whispered Cosette.

Black smoke rose up; she closed the widow and said to herself:

-'It's true: it's a bit chilly today!'

Meanwhile, the soldiers began to fire at the rioters. The latter beheld the shining helmet of a fireman who was spying on them from a neighboring roof.

-'What an annoying passer-by', exclaimed Enjolras.

Jean Valjean aimed his rifle at the fireman; a second later, the helmet, struck by a bullet, crashed against the pavement. The terrified man ran away. An artillery officer replaced him. Jean repeated the procedure. They did not send another man there to spy on them!

-'Why didn't you kill them?', asked Bossuet

Jean Valjean did not answer.

-'Listen', interjected Enjolras, 'Paris is waking up.'

Actually, the uproar that came from the surrounding area could be heard distinctly. On the morning of the 6th of June, for an hour or two, the Parisians tried to oppose the regime again, but the army hastened to subdue the rebels.

In St. Denis' Street, the government's response assumed the form of another cannon. It was positioned next to the first one and started firing at once.

-'Shoot at the artillerymen', shouted Enjolras.

The insurgents killed most of them.

-'Things are going pretty well for us', said Bossuet.

-'Yes, but we are running short of cartridges', concluded Enjolras.

CHAPTER IV: THE LAST SONG OF THE SPARROW.

Bullets were raining on them. Courfeyrac caught sight of Gavroche. He was searching the dead soldiers' pockets for cartridges.

-'What are you doing there?', asked Courfeyrac.

-'I am filling my basket with cartridges, citizen.'

-'Don't you see the grapeshot?'

-'You're right: the weather is very bad today.'

-'Come here!'

-'Later.'

He went down the street and found a powder flask. A bullet ricocheted off the pavement; he thrust the flask into his pocket. A second bullet overturned his basket. Gavroche looked around and realized that the soldiers who were firing at him came from the suburbs.

He rose to his feet, looked at them defiantly and sang:

'People of Nanterre are ugly;
It's Voltaire's fault.
People of Palaiseau are stupid;
'It's Rousseau's fault.'

He picked up his basket; a bullet missed him.

I am not a notary;
It's Voltaire's fault.
I'm a little bird,
It's Rousseau's fault.'

Another bullet ricocheted off a wall.

I am happy;
It's Voltaire's fault.
I am poor;
It's Rousseau's fault.'

Each gunshot startled the insurgents and made them feel uncomfortable, for, because of them, an eleven-year-old boy was risking life and limb to save the life of adult men!

A bullet struck him; they uttered a cry in unison; Gavroche fell.

I have just fallen to the ground;
It's Voltaire's fault.
My nose is in the gutter;
It's Rousseau's...'

A second bullet struck him; the little sparrow stopped singing; man had just killed humankind's future.

Marius jumped from the barricade; Combeferre followed him. It was too late: Gavroche was dead. Combeferre brought the basket of cartridges back; Marius carried the child into the cellar. He laid him next to Mr. Mabeuf and spread a black shawl on the two corpses.

CHAPTER V: THE REVENGE OF JEAN VALJEAN.

All at once they heard the faint sound of a clock striking the hour.

-'It is midday', said Combeferre.

Enjolras, who was on the top of the barricade shouted:

-'Remove the pavers and wall up the windows of the café: the sappers have just arrived.'

Then Enjolras went down to the cellar, laid a pistol on the table and said to Javert:

-'The last man to leave this place will kill you.'

Jean Valjean also went down to the cellar in order to speak to Enjolras discreetly:

-'Are you the commander?', he asked.

-'Yes, I am.'

-'You thanked me a while ago.'

-'In the name of the republic. The barricade has two saviors: Marius Pontmercy and you.'

-'Do you think that I deserve a reward?'

-'Most certainly.'

-'So, can you allow me to be the executioner?'

Javert looked at Jean Valjean and sighed:

-'Yes, it is that simple!'

-'All right!', said Enjolras. '

Jean cocked his gun. At that very moment, a bugle sounded the charge. Enjolras exited. Jean looked around to make sure that he was alone with Javert. Then he freed the rope around his ankles. Javert rose to his feet. Both men went upstairs, left the café discreetly, stepped over a fence and soon reached Mondétour Lane. Jean took a knife from his pocket, cut the rope that surrounded Javert's wrists and said to him:

-'You are free. I don't think that I will survive. However, you may need my address; I live at 7 Gunman Street; my new name is Ultime Fauchelevent... Now, go away.'

When Javert had disappeared, Jean fired his pistol into the air. Then he returned to the barricade and said:

-'It is done.'

CHAPTER VI: WHO ARE THE HEROES?

All at once the little drummer boy began to play the drum.

The attack was a hurricane. The two cannons kept on bombarding the barricade, which did not collapse. Since the cannons were inefficient, a forest of bayonets attacked *Masada*: the insurgents rushed into Corinthia

Café. The soldiers went mad. Blood demands blood; suffering calls for torture; the resentful warriors smashed down the door.

-'Let us sell our lives dearly', declaimed Enjolras.

-'He is the leader!', yelled one of the assailants. 'Let us kill him right now.'

Enjolras flung his rifle onto the floor, puffed out his chest and shouted:

-'Kill me.'

Twelve men aimed their riffles at him.

-'Hold on a minute', said an officer. 'Was it you who killed the Lieutenant?'

-'Yes, it was I.'

Grantaire, who had been sleeping since the preceding evening, was awakened by the racket. He saw his friend, jumped to his feet and yelled:

-'Long live the republic!'

Then he crossed the hall, positioned himself beside Enjolras and added:

-'Finish us off.'

Enjolras took his hand and smiled at him. The hall resounded with gunshots; the young men fell; two smiling roses entered eternity through barbarity.

In the meantime, Jean gazed at the six-storey building that was blocking his way. He beheld a pile of debris that concealed an iron grating. He approached it, looked through the bars and caught sight of a dark aperture. It resembled a chimney flue.

Jean pushed the debris away, lifted the grating, put Marius on his back and descended the stairs. He found himself in a sort of long subterranean corridor. It was quiet, peaceful and dark. Nevertheless, faint yells made him quicken his pace.

BOOK SECOND: THE AFTERMATH OF THE RIOT.

CHAPTER I: THE SEWER AND ITS SURPRISES.

He stretched out his arms, touched the walls on both sides and realized that the passage was narrow. The pavement was wet and slippery. Hence, he walked carefully. His nose filled with fetid air, which confirmed that he was in a sewer.

He went fifty paces and halted, for there was an intersection: he did not know in which direction he had to move. However, he realized that if he headed downstream, he would arrive at the River Seine. Since he was probably in the sewer of Les Halles, if he turned to the left, he would reach New Bridge, where many passers-by would see two men covered in blood, which would move them to call the Police. Hence, he turned to the right.

Even though there was no light, Jean walked as fast as he could. Marius' blood was trickling down upon him, but a warm breath indicated that he was still alive. All of a sudden, he noticed that the stream flowed downward. Was he heading for the River Seine? No, he wasn't; he was in St. Avoye's Sewer and was heading for the outskirts of Paris. He did not know it. Actually, he was guided by the noise coming from the surface.

When he heard the clanking noise of the coaches, he realized that he was entering a part of Paris where there were no riots. He caught sight of his shadow in front of him; he turned around: a glowing light illuminated eight or ten misty figures that were dancing in the dark. Bear in mind that, on the sixth of June, the Police Prefect Mr. Gisquet had the sewers searched, for he believed that the rebels would take refuge there.

The sergeant who was in charge of the patrol raised his lantern. The policemen looked around; Jean froze. He could see the light, but the light did not illuminate him. They pricked up their ears; Jean stopped breathing; they did not hear anything; Jean heard them whisper.

The sergeant ordered them to turn to the left. They headed for the River Seine. Jean saw the light disappear in the distance.

CHAPTER II: THE DEAL.

Even though he was tired, hungry and thirsty, he resumed walking. Marius was a skinny man, but a skinny man's weight can make an old man falter. Thankfully, from time to time, there were gusts of wind which enabled Jean to breathe easily.

He walked for an hour and halted. He gently laid Marius on the floor, unbuttoned his shirt and put his hand on his chest: his heart was still beating. A piece of paper protruded from his jacket's pocket. Jean unfolded it and read:

-'My name is Marius Pontmercy. Carry my body to Mr. Gillenormand's flat. He is my grandfather. He lives at 6 Filles-du-Calvaire Street.'

He folded the paper, replaced it in the jacket's pocket, put Marius on his back and resumed walking.

He reached the end of the tunnel; a grating stood between him and freedom: he was trapped like a rat in a hole. He looked through the bars and saw Jena Bridge. It was around nine o' clock in the evening. The sun was setting. He laid Marius on the ground, grasped the bars and shook them, but nothing moved. He turned around and plumped himself down.

Suddenly, someone laid his hand on his shoulder and said:

-'I suggest we split the profits between us.'

Jean looked up; he recognized Mr. Thénardier, but Mr. Thénardier did not recognize him, for his face was covered in blood.

-'How are you going to manage to get out?', inquired Thénardier. 'You cannot pick the lock, can you?'

-'No, I can't'.

-'So, let's split the profits between us.'

-'What do you mean by that?'

-'You have killed that man. I have the key. Let's make a deal: if you give me half of his money, I'll open the gate.'

He waved a big key.

-'This is the key to freedom.'

Jean took all the coins he had from his pockets: there were one gold coin and three silver coins. He grasped the four coins, helped Jean to replace Marius on his back and opened the gate. Jean exited. The gate closed quietly; Thénardier crawled into darkness mischievously.

CHAPTER III: SIR, HE IS NOT DEAD.

Jean looked at the sky: a few stars were shining. He laid Marius on the grass. He turned his head and beheld Javert, who did not recognize him. So the police inspector came up to him and asked:

-'Who are you?'

-'I?'

-'Yes, you!'

-'I am Jean Valjean.'

Javert bent down, took a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped jean's face and recognized him.

-'It is you!', he exclaimed.

-'Yes, it is I. Inspector Javert, I gave you my address this morning so that you might arrest me.'

-'What are you doing here, and who is this man?'

-'Actually, I must carry him home.'

Javert wiped Marius' face and said:

-'I know him: I saw him on the barricade.'

He seized Marius' hand: it was cold!

-'He is wounded', said Jean.

-'He is dead', interjected Javert.

-'No, not yet. He lives with his grandfather Mr. Gillenormand at 6 Filles-du-Calvaire Street.'

-'Coachman!', yelled the police inspector.

A carriage approached. They laid Marius on the back seat; Javert and Jean sat on the front seat. They slammed the door. The carriage headed towards the Bastille.

It was night when they arrived at 6 Filles-du-Calvaire Street. The coachman pulled Marius out of the carriage. Jean felt his pulse: his heart was beating faster. The caretaker, Javert and Jean carried him upstairs and laid him on an old sofa in Mr. Gillenormand's antechamber.

Then Jean and Javert got into the coach. Javert remained silent for a moment, but he ended up saying:

-'Driver, take us to Gunman Street.'

When the coach reached 7 Gunman Street, it stopped. Javert and Jean got off. The police inspector paid for the ride, dismissed the carriage and said to Jean:

-'Go upstairs; I will wait for you here.'

Jean stared at him in amazement, for the police inspector always handcuffed and escorted suspects. So he pushed the door open, entered the house and went upstairs. When he reached the first floor, the streetlight moved him to look through the window. He peeked at the street and stifled a scream: Javert had gone away.

CHAPTER III: THE GRANDFATHER.

Aunt Mary was devastated. She kept on saying: 'How come?' At times she added: 'Everything will be

covered with blood.' A few days after the initial shock, she admitted that Marius was a troublemaker.

The doctor examined him. He noticed that his pulse was not that weak, that there were only superficial wounds on his chest, and that the blood around his mouth came from his nostrils. Of course, the arms had been slashed, but the hemorrhage had not completely exhausted the patient. Hence, the prognosis was good.

A door opened at the end of the anteroom; Mr. Gillenormand's annoyed pallid face appeared. He saw the bed, the physician and the young man covered in blood; he trembled from head to foot; with tears in his eyes, he exclaimed:

-'Marius!'

-'Sir', said the servant, 'Mr. Marius has just been brought back. He was on the barricade and…'

-'He is dead!', interjected the old man. 'Ah, the rascal! Doctor, he is dead, isn't he?'

The doctor did not hear the question.

-'He is dead', groaned Mr. Gillenormand; 'he went to the barricade to get killed just because he hated me! He knew that I was waiting for him. I had his bedroom cleaned every day; I had placed a picture of him when he was a child on my bedside table; I was waiting for him. He knew that I would have agreed to all his request if he had returned, but he said to himself: “No, he is a royalist; I won't go back home.” He got killed out of sheer bravado! What did I do to deserve this?'

The physician put his hand on the old man's shoulder.

-'I thank you, sir', went on the old man; 'I witnessed the death of Louis XVI: I can stand history's cruelty… You see, doctor, I brought up this child on my own. I can still remember him playing with his bucket and shovel in the Tuileries Garden. He was a blond jewel, the spitting image of my daughter.'

He came up to his grandson and whispered:

-'You are a heartless boy, a politician, a terrorist!'

At that very moment, Marius opened his eyes very slowly.

-'Marius!', exclaimed the old man; 'My little Marius, my child, my beloved son! You are opening your eyes; you are looking at me; you are alive!'

-'Grandfather...'

Luke Gillenormand fainted!

CHAPTER IV: JAVERT'S SWANSONG.

Meanwhile, Javert went down Gunman Street. He headed for the River Seine and soon reached the Flower Market.

He rested his elbows on the parapet of St. Mary's Bridge and gazed at the whirlpools. He was undergoing great suffering. His monolithic world was shaking; his convictions were dissolving. Jean Valjean was neither a monster nor a saint. An ex-con had saved his life, which had led the police officer to let an outlaw escape. All things considered, he could not hand him over to the police, for it is immoral to imprison a benefactor. However, this good man was also a fugitive, and it is immoral to release a man who may be a danger to society. For the first time in his life, Inspector Javert had to think for himself.

What he had done made him shudder. He, Javert, had disobeyed the law, justice, and society in order to free a man. His volition had trampled the *Code of criminal procedure*. He, Javert, was not a brainless, obedient puppet anymore, for he had decided to become the puppeteer. Robert Saturnin Javert was overwhelmed, all the more so because Jean Valjean puzzled him. The brutish lout of Toulon had turned into the good-hearted mayor of Montreuil-sur-Mer, the caring guardian of Cosette, and the man who had saved his life. All of a sudden, the savior eclipsed the monster. Javert had always acknowledged the existence of sin; now he also

acknowledged the existence of goodness. Jean had been good to Javert; Javert had been good to Jean; the salve to the state was becoming a free man, which terrified him.

It was midnight. The clouds concealed the stars. A streetlamp illuminated a part of the bridge. Javert remained motionless for several minutes. All at once he took off his hat and placed it on the edge of the quay. A moment later, a tall black figure that was walking on the parapet darted towards the abyss. A loud splash ensued.

BOOK THIRD: THE GRANDSON AND HIS GRANDFATHER.

CHAPTER I: MARIUS' CONVALESCENCE.

Marius was neither dead nor alive. He suffered from delirium for many weeks and kept repeating Cosette's name! As for his grandfather, he was neither dead nor alive: each breath Marius took was either a sorrow or a relief.

Every day, sometimes twice a day, an elegant white-haired gentleman came to inquire about the wounded man's health. Finally, on the 7th of September 1832, the physician said that Marius was out of danger. Hence, his convalescence began. However, if delirium had vanished into thin air, he was still obsessed with Cosette. Besides, he could not help ruminating over Éponine, Gavroche, Mr. Mabeuf, the Thénardiers and Mr. Fauchelevent, who puzzled him.

On one occasion, Mr. Gillenormand said to his grandson:

-'You see, Marius, it is time for you to eat meat; *sole meunière* is a delicious dish, but a convalescent must eat

lamb chops and *filet mignon* so that he may recover rapidly.

Marius sat up, looked his grandfather straight in the eye and said:

-'I prefer fish to meat, and... I want to get married.'

-'All right!'

-'All right?'

-'Yes, it is high time you got married.'

Marius was bedazzled.

-'I know the girl', went on Mr. Gillenormand; 'she lives at 7 Gunman Street. She has been weeping for the past three months. You know, Marius, I am not a heartless man. Besides, it is politics that causes conflict between people, not women.

-'Grandfather', said Marius, 'this time, I won't go away.'

-'I hope you don't hate me.'

-'I love you, but you are so stubborn.'

-'You too.'

-'Grandfather, since I am fine, I would like to see her.'

-'You'll see her tomorrow.'

-'Today would be better.'

-'All right! This story reminds me of André Chénier's *Sick Boy*. Poor Chénier: he was murdered by the wolves, I mean the giants...

Marius frowned.

-'Murdered is not the right word. I should say that those witty revolutionaries, those righteous politicians, those friendly... rascals had him guillotined!'

The old man rose to his feet; Marius shook his head and closed his eyes.

-'Basque', yelled Mr. Gillenormand as his servant approached, 'those ruffians assassinated him!'

-'Who, sir?'

-'André Chénier!'

-'How come?'

CHAPTER II: COSETTE'S DOWRY.

Cosette and Marius met. The entire family, including the servants Basque and Nicolette, were in Marius' bedroom when Cosette entered.

-'What an adorable girl!', exclaimed Mr. Gillenormand.

Cosette threw herself in Marius' arms. Jean Valjean, who was clad in black, was behind her. The caretaker turned to his wife and murmured:

-'It may sound strange, but I've seen that face before.'

Jean was near the door. He was holding a package that looked like a big book. Mary Gillenormand, who was not a learned woman, whispered in her father's ear:

-'Is this man a professor?'

-'Well, he looks the part!'

The old man came up to him and said:

-'How do you do?'

-'How do you do?', repeated Jean.

-'Dear Mr. Fowlevent, on behalf of my grandson Lord Pontmercy, I beseech you to allow him to marry your daughter.'

Jean agreed to the marriage. Then Mr. Gillenormand sat near Marius and Cosette and said:

-'Isn't she pretty? She is even prettier than the *Venus de Milo*. She will only be a baroness; she should become a marchioness at least. Unfortunately, my grandson cannot offer you a castle...

-'Miss Euphrasie Fauchelevent', interjected Jean, 'possesses six hundred thousand francs.'

-'Six hundred thousand francs', murmured Mr. Gillenormand.

Jean opened the package and started to pile rolls of bills on the table. Mr. Gillenormand turned to his daughter and whispered:

-'This is a very expensive book.'

-'Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!', murmured Aunt Mary.

-'Oh, you can read!'

-'Five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs!', repeated Aunt Mary in a low voice. 'This is a lot of money; she may afford to buy a castle after all!'

Jean and Mr. Gillenormand planned the wedding; it was scheduled for February. The old man, Jean and Aunt Mary agreed that the young couple would live with Mr. Gillenormand. He offered them his bedroom; they accepted the present with good grace. Besides, Mr. Gillenormand's library became Marius' study, for he had to have one in order to be accepted as a barrister.

BOOK FOURTH: THE SLEEPLESS NIGHT.

CHAPTER I: THE 16TH OF FEBRUARY 1833.

The 16th of February 1833 was a happy day because a carnival took place in the streets of Paris and it was the day when Marius married Cosette.

On the preceding evening, Jean Valjean had handed the five hundred and eighty-four thousand francs to Marius. Mrs. Toussaint became Cosette's servant; Jean was offered a beautiful bedroom in Mr. Gillenormand's house. He promised Cosette that he would leave his own house in order to live with the young couple.

At eight o'clock in the evening, the wedding procession headed towards the Bastille. The streets were overflowing with masks, clowns, tumblers and a merry crowd wearing fancy dresses: Paris looked like Venice.

A traffic jam compelled the carriages to halt. Cosette's coach faced a cart full of masked people.

-'Look!', said a masked individual. 'That's a wedding procession.'

-'This is a masquerade', retorted another masked individual, 'for we are the genuine wedding procession.'

-'You may be right, daddy.'

-'Have you seen that old codger?'

-'Who?'

-'The man in the first coach.'

-'Oh, yes.'

-'I feel certain that I know him.'

-'Really?'

-'Can you see the bride?'

-'No, I can't.'

-'And the bridegroom?'

-'There is no bridegroom in that coach.'

-'Never mind! I know that old codger. You should find out where these people are going.'

-'I can't.'

-'Why?'

-'I'm working today!'

-'For whom?'

-'For me: I am hiding from the police. Why don't you do it yourself?'

-'I am acting incognito.'

-'From whom are you hiding?'

-'The police, of course. Please, Azelma, follow that wedding procession.'

The vehicles began to move. The cart full of masked people could not catch up with the coach in which the bride was seated.

After the wedding ceremony, the guests dined in Mr. Gillenormand's house. They gathered around *Madame la Baronne* in order to congratulate her. Théodule Gillenormand greeted her; she did not recognize him. He drank a glass of *Champagne* and forgot her presence. In the anteroom, a string quartet was playing tunes

composed by Haydn. The guests entered the dining room; Jean took French leave.

-'Do you know where Mr. Fauchelevent is?', asked Mr. Gillenormand

-'Sir', replied Basque, 'Mr. Fauchelevent has just left. He is indisposed. He told me that his age forbids him to overindulge.'

-'It is true that he is much older than I.'

CHAPTER II: THE SMALL SUITCASE.

Jean Valjean arrived at his flat on Gunman Street. He lighted a candle and ascended the steps. The apartment was empty. He entered his bedroom and set the candle on the table. His gaze fell upon the small suitcase which Cosette called the love case. He took a key from his pocket and opened it.

He looked at Cosette's black dress, black shoes and black stockings. Yesterday, she was in mourning; so was Jean; today she is happy. He suddenly remembered Montfermeil's forest. She was so small. She had put a gold coin in the pocket of the apron he was laying on the bed. He was her savior; she was his raison d'être. Jean burst into tears.

Jean, you wanted her to be happy; you saved her from destitution; why are you crying? She is happy today; her bliss should content you. You know, children must grow up and become adults with or without their parents' help. You watered the flower; the flower bloomed: lilies do not belong to the gardener, for nature belongs to itself. All those pretty flowers are not the gardener's raison d'être. Man sows the seeds of love; he plants the tree of wisdom next to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and recreates this way the Garden of Eden, namely a place where loneliness does not exist and where humanity flourishes. Don't you think that you fulfilled this goal?

Life is not an incomprehensible question asked by an improbable sphinx. Human beings are born evil under the adamant sun of truth. If caterpillars refuse to acknowledge its existence, they burn eternally in the fire of their solitary madness. If they choose to be in tune with reality, they become sociable iridescent butterflies. Cosette chose to become a butterfly; what about you?

His reverie lasted all night long. He remained in the flat until daylight. All of a sudden, he shuddered convulsively, kissed Cosette's dress and rose to his feet.

BOOK FIFTH: AT DUSK.

CHAPTER I: THE ROOM ON THE GROUND FLOOR.

On the following day, at nightfall, Jean Valjean moved to Cosette’s new residence. He knocked on the coach gate of Mr. Gillenormand's house. Basque opened it and said:

-'Lord Pontmercy would like to know whether you want to go upstairs or stay in the small room on the ground floor.'

-'I prefer to stay in the small room', replied Jean.

The male servant led him to the room and went to inform Cosette. Jean sat down. A moment later, Cosette entered the room and said:

-'Father, you are an old eccentric: you prefer a small room with no fireplace to a luxurious sitting room.'

-'Madam, I don't want to bother you.'

-'Madam?'

-'You are a married woman now.'

-'Father, I am a married woman, but I am also your daughter.'

-'Don't call me father; call me Jean! Husbands are like fathers; when a woman gets married, her father must take a back seat.'

-'Oh! You seem to be upset. I hope you are not jealous of my happiness.'

Jean turned pale.

-'Your happiness is my main aim in life. When I first saw you, you were a sad little girl. I did my best to alleviate your sorrow. I made you smile; I made you laugh; now it is your husband's duty to make you happy.'

Jean kissed Cosette.

-'I will see you tomorrow.'

He left the room. Cosette remembered her past.

CHAPTER II: A STEP BACKWARDS.

Jean used to come at the same hour every night. Marius was always absent. As for Mr. Gillenormand, he regarded him as a pleasant eccentric, an easygoing ghost. Nobody dared to look behind appearances and see the dragon that burnt the souls.

Many weeks elapsed. Cosette's life changed little by little: this new house, Mr. Gillenormand, Marius, their friends and acquaintances added touches of color to her daily routine. Since Mrs. Toussaint could not stand Nicolette, she quit. Marius had a few clients. His grandfather did not want to grow old. Aunt Mary embroidered blouses she did no wear. Cosette was with Marius, went out with Marius, and stayed at home with Marius. As for Jean, he came every day.

Jean called Cosette *Madam* now; she called him Jean. She became a happy housewife; he became a serene man. She continued to love him; he continued to venerate her.

On one occasion, she said to him: 'You were my father; you are no longer my father; you were my uncle; you are no longer my uncle; you were Mr. Fauchelevent; you are Jean now. Who are you in reality? You are so mysterious. If I did not know you, I would fear you.'

He still lived in the apartment on Gunman Street, for it was near Cosette's house.

In the beginning, he only stayed a few minutes with Cosette, and then he went away. Little by little, he lengthened his visits: the mistrust of the first days gave way to a relaxed atmosphere.

CHAPTER III: RETURN TO THE GARDEN ON PLUMET STREET.

Marius was in the sitting room; he was looking through the window: in the garden, the hawthorns were blooming. He opened the window; a delicate scent reminded him of his past.

-'Cosette', said he, 'I feel like going to the garden on Plumet Street...'

All of a sudden, he grasped the hand of his wife and helped her to rise to her feet. They spent the afternoon in the garden on Plumet Street. Cosette forgot her appointment with Jean!

On the following evening, when she met him, she was so happy that she kept on talking about her wonderful afternoon in the delightful garden of her beloved past.

-'How did you go to the garden?', inquired Jean.

-'On foot', retorted Cosette.

-'And how did you return?'

-'In a hackney cab.'

-'Why don't you purchase a carriage? You are rich.'

-'I don’t know.'

-'Madam, you should have your own house, your own servants, a carriage, luxurious dresses, diamonds and pearls.'

-'I think that my husband is a thrifty man. Yesterday he said to me: “Cosette, we have an income of thirty thousand francs. Twenty-seven thousand francs come from your dowry and three thousand francs from

my grandfather. If necessary, could you live on the three thousand francs?"'

It was clear that Marius had doubts about the origin of the six hundred thousand francs. He knew that the money came from Jean Valjean, that it to say a person whom he regarded as a thief. Hence, the righteous young man preferred to live in poverty and was considering giving up that money.

On the following day, Jean was shocked by what he saw: when he entered the small room on the ground floor, the two armchairs had disappeared!

-'Ah, what's this!', exclaimed Cosette, 'Where are the armchairs?'

-'They are no longer here', replied Jean.

-'Why?'

-'I told Basque to remove them', he stammered, 'for I won't stay long. I think that Basque placed them in the dinning room. I assume that you will have company tonight.'

-'We are not expecting anybody!'

Jean bowed to Cosette, came up to the door and murmured: 'Farewell'. He had realized that his presence upset Marius. He never returned to Mr. Gillenormand's house.

BOOK SIXTH: SUPREME SHADOW, SUPREME DAWN.

CHAPTER I: A LAMP WITHOUT OIL.

The female servant opened Jean's bedroom door and exclaimed:

-'You haven't eaten anything.'

-'I have.'

-'The plate is full.'

-'Look at the water jug: it is empty.'

-'That proves that you have drunk; it does not prove that you have eaten!'

-'I will eat tomorrow.'

-'Sir, you look sick; I am going to fetch a doctor.'

-'I feel fine.'

A few hours later, a physician examined him. Then he went downstairs and chatted with the caretaker.

-'Well, doctor', said she, 'is Mr. Fauchelevent sick?'

-'Yes, he is.'

-'What is the matter with him?'

-'I don't really know. To all appearances, he is a man who has lost a person whom he loves. You know, people die of that.'

-'What did he tell you?'

-'He told me that he was in good health.'

-'Is is true?'

-'All patients are in good health before they get sick!'

-'Will you come tomorrow?

-'Yes, but I will bring one of my colleagues with me, for I need a second opinion.'

CHAPTER II: THE DENOUEMENT.

That very evening, Basque handed a letter to Marius and told him that the person who had written it was awaiting his reply in the anteroom. Marius read it and asked the male servant to show him in.

-'Mr. Thénard!'

-'I am delighted to make your acquaintance.'

-'It seems that you have a secret you want to share with me.'

-'Lord Pontmercy, it is my duty to tell you that there is a thief and an assassin in your house.'

Marius shuddered.

-'In my house!', he exclaimed.

-'His name is Jean Valjean.'

-'Jean Valjean!'

-'He is an ex-convict.'

-'An ex-convict in my house! I knew that Basque was weird-looking, but I did not know that he was a thief and an assassin.'

-'It is not he.'

-'It cannot be my grandfather, for he is a royalist: royalists are murderers, not thieves.'

-'Lord Pontmercy, ten thousand francs would move me to reveal the identity of the man and describe his crimes so that you may get rid of him.'

-'It is very thoughtful of you, Mr. Thénard... ier, alias Jondrette, Fabantou, Genflot, Alvarez de Urda, Balizard, and so on!'

-'You know me! It is strange: I don't know you.'

Liars don't lie all the time: Mr. Thénardier had been Marius' neighbor but he had never met him.

-'Mr. Thénardier, I have a secret I want to share with you. In 1822, in Montreuil-sur-Mer, a good-hearted man called Mr. Madeleine was savagely attacked by Jean Valjean. The latter compelled him to give him all his money, and then he killed him. He also killed Mr. Javert, the police inspector who had found him.'

-'With all due respect, Lord Pontmercy, I think that you misinterpreted some facts.'

-'I am a lawyer: I never misinterpret facts, I just embellish stories!'

-'Actually, he did not rob Mr. Madeleine, for Mr. Madeleine and Jean Valjean are one and the same person. Besides, I was present when Inspector Javert died.'

Mr. Thénardier handed him a newspaper and added:

-'On page ten, the journalist says that he killed himself!'

-'I made a terrible mistake!'

-'To err is human... However, this man is a criminal. On the 6th of June 1832, I chanced to meet him in the

sewer of Les Halles. He was carrying a corpse on his back. I looked at the dead man: he was young and covered in blood. Then Jean Valjean told me that he wanted to get rid of the body. I asked him who was this man. He answered that he was a wealthy passer-by whom he had killed in order to steal his money. I was terrified. I opened the gate of the sewer so that he might escape and discretely tore at the young man's jacket. Look at this piece of fabric.'

Marius turned pale. He grasped the piece of fabric, opened a closet, seized a jacket and exclaimed:

-'It was I! Jean Valjean saved my life!'

Mr. Thénardier blushed, bowed to Marius and tiptoed out of the room.

Then Marius rushed into the garden and shouted:

-'Cosette! Cosette! Your father saved my life. Put on your shawl: we must talk with him.'

CHAPTER III: THEY BADE FAREWELL TO THE DOVE.

Someone knocked at the door.

-'Come in', murmured Jean.

The door opened. Cosette and Marius entered the room.

-'Cosette!', exclaimed jean.

She sat on the bed and kissed his brow. Marius remained standing and said:

-'Sir, I apologize! You saved my life and I mistreated you. Why didn't you tell me the whole story?''

-'Because I had to leave. If I had told you the truth, you would have asked me to stay with you.'

-'The truth always comes out. Hence, I am asking you to come back home.'

-'I can't, for I loved once. I was a solitary soul walking along the road of human nature. I was a stray dog looking for its master. I found him. He taught me what humanity meant; he gave me the candlesticks that

illumined my life; he enabled me to become a human being. The rabid dog turned into a dove; the dove loved Cosette. Marius, it is your turn to love people.'

The door creaked; the doctor entered. He felt Jean's pulse.

-'You know, Marius, love is the ultimate goal. I have loved Cosette: I can leave. You don't love her enough: you must stay.'

The physician turned to Marius and whispered:

-'You should fetch a priest.'

-'He does not need a priest', said Cosette, and she pointed at the two silver candlesticks.

A moonbeam illuminated them; Jean closed his eyes.

CHAPTER IV: HE WILL REST IN PEACE.

Yesterday, I went to Père Lachaise's cemetery, for I wanted to place flowers on Jean Valjean' s grave.

As usual, I got lost: the marble mausoleums of the rich overshadow poor people's grief and always prevent me from finding my way to where I want to go. I caught sight of a park-keeper.

-'Sir', said I, 'could you tell me where the grave of Jean Valjean is?'

-'How bizarre!', answered the man, 'A child asked me the same question this morning. Follow me.'

The man led me to an isolated place where a conker tree concealed a humble slab. I sat on the grave, placed my flowerpot on it and discovered three sentences that had been written with a lead pencil. It said:

He was born neither good nor evil.
Reason overcame barbarity.
He exited from a dark tunnel
In order to crown humanity.

Societies are like individuals, they were born neither good nor evil. Hence, it is everybody's duty to choose to follow the only acceptable road: reason. A society governed by reason never plunges into barbarity. A society governed by illusion leads to self-destruction. Jean Valjean is sleeping; he is sleeping within you. If you decide to acknowledge his existence within you, you will be able to build a better world. The future of mankind mustn't be Hell!